



LIBRARY OF HEAVEN'S PATH

BOOK 08

Heng Sao Tian Ya

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Library of Heaven's Path

(Tian Dao Du Shu Guan)

(天道图书馆)

by

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Synopsis

Zhang Xuan traverses into a foreign world and becomes an honorable teacher. A mysterious library appears in his mind. As long as it is something he has seen, regardless of whether it is a human or an object, a book on its weakness would be automatically compiled. Thus, he became formidable.

“Emperor Haotian, why don’t you like to wear underwear? To think that you’re still an emperor, can you pay more attention to your image?”

“Fairy Linglong, if you continue to suffer from insomnia, you can always look for me. I have a way with lullabies!”

“You as well, Qiankun Demon Lord, can you cut down on the garlic? Do you want to stink me to death?”

...

This is an incredible story about the heritage between teacher and students, cultivating and guiding the world’s strongest experts.

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Chapter 701 Bazaar

After leaving King Huai Manor, Zhang Xuan turned to Sun Qiang and instructed, "Sun Qiang, find suitable living quarters with a good atmosphere in proximity to the academy within the next two days!"

As a student of the Master Teacher Academy, he was allowed to stay at the Academic Sea. However, going by the rules, Zheng Yang and the others weren't qualified to live there. This was also part of the reason Hong shi and the others allowed them to leave with King Huai without much protest.

While it wasn't a problem for them to stay in the Academic Sea for a few days, complaints from the other students would arise soon enough if their stay stretched on. Rather than having to deal with the mess then, they might as well find suitable lodgings now. This way, it would be more convenient for Zhang Xuan to conduct lessons for them, and Zheng Yang and the others need not be so restrained as well.

"Yes!" Sun Qiang nodded.

As the butler, he was in charge of the miscellaneous affairs of the group. The others only needed to focus on their cultivation.

"Teacher, I think I am on the verge of a breakthrough!"

After relaying some instructions, Zhang Xuan was just about to return to the Academic Sea when he heard Wang Ying's voice. Turning around, he saw a powerful aura flowing around the latter's body. Her zhenqi was trembling in her acupoints, and it seemed that she would make a breakthrough at any moment!

She was currently at Yin-Yang realm pinnacle, so with this breakthrough, she would reach Transcendent Mortal 4-dan Clarifying Turbidity realm.

She had been working hard over the past month, and she had

long reached the peak of Yin-Yang realm, but the impetus for a breakthrough just didn't seem to come somehow. However, the intense emotion from the parting with Yuan Tao had resonated with her cultivation, thus allowing her to take this final step forward.

"Great Violetwing Beast!"

Knowing that opportunities for achieving a breakthrough didn't come easily, Zhang Xuan immediately beckoned his tamed beast telepathically. Then, with a sweep of his zhenqi, the group soared into the air and landed on the back of the Great Violetwing Beast.

Several dozen breaths later, they finally returned back to the Academic Sea. After arranging for Zheng Yang and the others to stay at his room for the time being, Zhang Xuan took Wang Ying to a silent chamber and stood guard for her as she attempted the breakthrough.

In Clarifying Turbidity realm, one's soul and physical body would be clearly divided into two. Even though Wang Ying possessed a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art so making the breakthrough shouldn't be a problem at all, it would still be difficult for her to maintain the consonance between her body and soul while preventing their merging.

Nevertheless, she would only benefit the greatest from this breakthrough if she were to achieve a breakthrough while enduring this pressure. Thus, Zhang Xuan didn't intend to interfere at all.

Gugugugu!

Her acupoints furiously devoured spiritual energy from the surroundings as zhenqi rushed through her body. With a harrumph, a surge of zhenqi rushed up her Baihui acupoint and gushed out.

Boom!

The division of clarity and turbidity—Transcendent Mortal 4-dan Clarifying Turbidity realm reached!

At this moment, Wang Ying exuded an overwhelmingly powerful aura reminiscent of a sword.

'This is... a breakthrough in her Will of Mind?'

Zhang Xuan's eyelids twitched furiously.

Just like master teachers, cultivators could also achieve breakthroughs in their Will of Mind as well. The only difference was that the former was more sided toward the analytical aspect whereas the latter was more sided toward practicality in combat.

Even though a breakthrough to Clarifying Turbidity realm would boost one's cultivation significantly, it still wasn't possible for one to exude such a sharp aura. Clearly, Wang Ying had reached a higher realm in her Will of Mind!

Scarlet Heart realm!

'This is truly a fortuitous encounter!'

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

In the Fighter realm, the cultivation of one's physical body and zhenqi took priority, but beyond Clarifying Turbidity realm, the importance of Will of Mind would start to shine through.

After all, this was intricately tied to the purity of one's soul. If one could temper their Will of Mind, their cultivation would be much smoother and faster in the future.

Humans are beings possessing sentience, and thus they are vulnerable to the disturbances around them. This made it nigh impossible for them to focus all of their attention to the task they had at hand.

However, the Crimson Heart realm allowed one to toss aside their miscellaneous thoughts to focus their efforts on cultivating. In such a state, one's cultivation would be several times more

effective than usual!

It could be said that upon reaching the realm, Wang Ying's cultivation would only grow faster and faster, and she would eventually far surpass Zheng Yang and the others.

'Even though this lass is reticent, it seems like she possesses great determination...'

Zhang Xuan shook his head with a bitter smile.

Wang Ying's talent was not on par with Zhao Ya, her resilience was not on par with Lu Chong, her flexibility was not on par with Zheng Yang, her cunningness was not on par with Yuan Tao, and her worldliness was not on par with Liu Yang... But even so, she still managed to stand her own ground and shine among them. And now, she had even comprehended the Crimson Heart realm!

It seemed like meticulousness and composure were the strongest factors influencing the advancement of one's cultivation!

"Given her rate of cultivation, it won't be long before she requires a Consonant Spirit realm cultivation technique. However, I don't have one at the moment..."

Since Wang Ying was already past the crucial period, there was no need for Zhang Xuan to stand guard anymore. While he was heartened by Wang Ying's breakthrough, another new problem cropped up, and he pinched his glabella.

While Zhang Xuan had reached Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle, he had only managed to do so due to the assistance of the white-robed lady and the means of a soul oracle. He still didn't have a Consonant Spirit realm Heaven's Path Divine Art manual in the Library of Heaven's Path yet.

He had to quickly search for it, or else Wang Ying might find her cultivation stagnating very soon.

Thus, after leaving the secret chamber, he immediately headed toward Hong shi's room.

Upon finding the other party, Zhang Xuan asked, "Hong shi, do you know where I can find Consonant Spirit realm and Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation technique manuals?"

"Cultivation technique manuals? I can find a few for you, but... how many do you need?" Hong shi was slightly startled by Hong shi's request.

"The more the better," Zhang Xuan replied.

"Give me a moment, I'll take a look..."

Saying so, Hong shi walked out of the room. Not too long later, he returned with several dozen books.

"I was able to find forty Consonant Spirit realm cultivation technique manuals, but I could only find three for Cosmos Bridge realm!" Not knowing what the other party intended to use the secret manuals for, Hong shi tried to gather as many books as he could.

The fifty geniuses from Huanyu Empire were all Consonant Spirit realm cultivators. Thus, it wasn't too difficult to gather some cultivation technique manuals from them. However, gathering Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation technique manuals would be tricky.

Only Feng shi and Luo shi had some in their possession.

"Forty..." Zhang Xuan brushed his fingers through them and shook his head.

Forty books might already be an impressive collection to others, but to Zhang Xuan, it was far from sufficient from meeting his goal.

Passing the books back to Hong shi, Zhang Xuan asked, "Where can I find more cultivation technique manuals? The quality doesn't matter, I am only interested in the quantity."

"Then... how many books do you need?"

Hong shi was stunned to hear that even forty books were less than sufficient.

Even he would have to take several months before he could finish reading and comprehending those books. Yet, Zhang shi actually said that it wasn't enough. How many did he need then?

"At least a thousand!" Zhang Xuan replied.

"A thousand?"

Hong shi staggered and nearly fell to the ground.

Even though all kinds of cultivation techniques appeared in the world after the establishment of the Master Teacher Pavilion as though flowers blooming with the onset of summer, finding a thousand different cultivation technique manuals was still an extremely difficult feat!

After all, there wasn't a single cultivation technique that came to the world just because one willed it to. Each of these cultivation techniques contained the crystallization of an expert's comprehension of the cultivation realm and their relentless effort to refine it.

"That's right. Do you know where I can find them?" asked Zhang Xuan, oblivious to the shock going through the other party's mind.

"This..."

Seeing that the other party didn't seem to be joking, Hong shi rubbed his glabella and said, "The Master Teacher Academy will surely have plenty of books there. I think you will be able to easily find tens of thousands of the books you want there..."

The Master Teacher Academy was a place which gathered the talented master teachers all over the world. Over many millennia of heritage, many cultivation techniques and secret arts had been left behind by generations of geniuses, thus forming an impressive collection. However, as Zhang Xuan had yet to become an official student of the academy, not to mention that he didn't have any

academic credits either, he would be unable to access the books there.

"Right!"

Suddenly, a thought came to Hong shi, and his eyes lit up. "There will be a bazaar for the freshmen over the next few days, and there will surely be some who are selling cultivation technique manuals too. You can go over to take a look. Given how many freshmen there are in the Academic Sea, it shouldn't be a problem for you to find a thousand books!"

"Bazaar?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"Un! The freshmen from the various empires have brought along the local specialties from their own empires, as well as their own unique cultivation techniques. By conducting this bazaar, the freshmen will be able to get acquainted with another, trade resources, and share their own views and experiences on cultivation. This way, everyone will be able to raise their fighting prowess to some extent, thus increasing the overall chances of clearing the entrance examination!" Hong shi said.

"Alright. Where is this bazaar conducted? I'll go and take a look!"

Upon hearing that there was such a gathering, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

"It is conducted on the center ship in the middle of the Academic Sea!"

Hong shi pointed.

At the center of the Academic Sea was a gigantic lake. Zhang Xuan had thought that it was just for scenery purposes, but who knew that the bazaar would actually be conducted there?

Zhang Xuan left the residence and walked toward the lake. It didn't take him too long to arrive at his destination. Even though spring had already set in, the frigidity of winter had yet to dispel entirely. The slight breeze sweeping across the surface of the lake

carried bone-chilling intent with it.

Gazing toward the center of the lake, Zhang Xuan saw a gigantic vessel floating at a distance of several thousand meters away. A bustling crowd was gathered on it.

"There are small boats over there to row participants of the bazaar over..."

The vessel floated in the middle of the lake, and there was no path leading to it. After scanning the surroundings, Hong shi noticed a small rowing boat not too far away, and the duo immediately walked over.

Hong shi walked up and asked, "How much does it cost to get to the Great Bazaar?"

The elderly rower raised his droopy eyes and replied, "A middle-tier spirit stone!"

"A middle-tier spirit stone? This is daylight robbery!" Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in shock.

Even a low-tier spirit stone felt extravagant for a journey this short, and yet, this old man wanted a middle-tier spirit stone. Wasn't he taking advantage of their situation!

"Daylight robbery? If you find it expensive, you can traverse across the lake yourself! But let me warn you, there are plenty of Transcendent Mortal 7-dan and 8-dan spirit beasts in the Academic Lake, so do try not to get eaten!"

Seemingly used to this scene, the old man shrugged off Zhang Xuan's words with a smirk.

Since there were land-bound and aerial spirit beasts, naturally there were aquatic spirit beasts as well. In fact, they were even more numerous than land-bound spirit beasts.

Considering the size of the lake, it shouldn't come as a surprise that there were plenty of powerful spirit beasts in it.

Having reached Consonant Spirit realm, even though one was still unable of flight, stepping across a body of water wouldn't pose a problem. Just that... if there were spirit beasts in the water, one would have to think twice before doing so. Who knew if an aquatic spirit beast would be waiting with widened jaws under the next step one took?

On the other hand, the boat seemed to be imbued with some kind of formation that deterred the aquatic spirit beasts.

"This..." Hong shi hesitated. Just as he was still considering whether to take the ride or not, a middle-tier spirit stone was thrown into the hands of the old man, and with a blur, two silhouettes landed on the boat.

"Set off!"

Taking a closer look at the two figures who had just appeared on the boat, they were the young man and Senior Feng, whom Zhang Xuan defeated with just a single finger before.

Upon receiving the middle-tier spirit stone, the elder grabbed his oars and dipped them into the lake. Slowly, the boat began to advance toward the vessel at the center of the lake. The young man glanced at Zhang Xuan derisively and said, "Why bother going to the bazaar when you can't even fork out a single middle-tier spirit stone..."

Even though Senior Feng didn't say anything, contempt could be seen in his eyes as well. Zhang shi had defeated him with a single finger before a huge crowd. While the other party had gone easy on him, it was still inevitable that he felt humiliated by the matter. As such, he still felt some degree of hostility to the other party.

Therefore, he couldn't help but feel a little gleeful when he saw that the 'great' Zhang shi was unable to fork out even a single middle-tier spirit stone.

But at that moment, the two men standing by the shore abruptly

leaped into the sky.

Hu!

They landed on the back of a giant Great Violetwing Beast.

The massive spirit beast flapped its violet wings, creating a powerful gale that created huge waves on the surface of the water. Even the boat also began to rock violently before the powerful gale. In the blink of an eye, the Great Violetwing Beast was already halfway through the journey to the vessel in the middle of the lake.

Chapter 702 Exchange!

"A Half Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Great Violetwing Beast?"

Senior Feng and the young man were stunned, and their eyelids began twitching uncontrollably.

As Transcendent Mortal 5-dan cultivators, even if they were to own an aerial spirit beast, it would only be at Cosmos Bridge realm at most. Considering the limited height they could fly at due to the ceiling above them, chances were that they could be struck down by a sudden assault from the Transcendent Mortal 7-dan or 8-dan spirit beasts in the lake.

On the other hand, the Great Violetwing Beast was different. Standing at Half 9-dan, any spirit beasts which dared to challenge it would be slaughtered in an instant.

And as expected, just as this thought was lingering in their mind, a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan fish abruptly leaped from the surface of the water with a gaping mouth filled with sharp teeth, wanting to swallow Zhang Xuan and Hong shi whole. But before it could even reach them, a swift strike from a talon crushed it to death. The Great Violetwing Beast dug out its inner core adeptly before throwing the carcass back into the lake.

Swallowing a mouthful of saliva, Senior Feng's voice uttered with a hoarse voice, "How can he have such a powerful tamed beast?"

Wasn't he a Consonant Spirit realm cultivator just like them?

To actually have tamed a half 9-dan spirit beast to be his tamed beast... How in the world did he manage to do it?

He thought that the other party was just a miser who wasn't even willing to spend a single middle-tier spirit stone on a boat ride, and he had felt gleeful and a sense of superiority at having successfully stole the other party's ride. However, upon seeing this sight, he suddenly realized... how laughable his actions were!

With such a formidable spirit beast, one wouldn't even spare a second glance at this shabby boat...

Putting aside paying for the ride, they wouldn't be willing even if they were to be paid for the ride!

"Senior Feng... why did they suddenly stop in the middle of the lake?"

Amidst his shock, the perplexed voice from the young man beside him suddenly sounded. Lifting his gaze, he saw the Great Violetwing Beast pausing in midair, not in a hurry to head to the bazaar at all.

Didn't he ride on his aerial spirit beast so that he could arrive at the bazaar faster? Why would he be stopping in the middle of the lake then?

While he was still bewildered by the issue, the Great Violetwing Beast suddenly flapped its wings once more and glided down to the surface of the water. Its talons reached deep into the water and clamped down on something.

Hu la!

Another Transcendent Mortal 8-dan aquatic spirit beast resembling a prawn was crushed to death by its talons, and its inner core was swiftly retrieved from its body.

After this, the Great Violetwing Beast returned to the air. A moment later, it swooped down to another part of the lake once more...

"They are... hunting?"

The duo along with the rower glanced at one another in astonishment.

To others, this lake was no different from a dangerous landmine. They would never traverse through it without sufficient preparation. Yet, that fellow actually regarded this place as a

treasure trove and began fishing for prey...

"How can the Great Violetwing Beast capture the spirit beasts in the water?"

What came along with their astonishment was disbelief.

The Great Violetwing Beast was indeed formidable, there was little to argue about that, but no matter how strong it was, its field of expertise lay in the air. The aquatic spirit beasts should have been able to avoid it easily in their own home ground even if they were no match for it... so how could the Great Violetwing Beast hunt them down so accurately?

It was as if it could predict where the aquatic spirit beasts would swim to. Every strike it made was bound to end in a kill...

But how was this possible?

"Indeed... More importantly, no matter how powerful the Great Violetwing Beast is, it shouldn't be that easy for it to kill a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beast either..."

Even if a half 9-dan was stronger than an 8-dan, the gap wasn't so huge as for the Great Violetwing Beast to kill them in a single strike. This was particularly so for spirit beasts, which possessed superior defense to human cultivators. But... the Great Violetwing Beast seemed to be able to discern the weaknesses of the spirit beasts in the water accurately and strike them down precisely...

This was way too formidable...

While those on the boat were completely dumbstruck by the sight before them, Zhang Xuan was currently staring at the inner cores with his hand with a satisfied smile.

To trade at the bazaar, he would require some capital, but he didn't have a penny to his name at the moment. Since there were so many spirit beasts that were rushing forward to fill his pockets, it was only right for him to accept their offerings gratuitously.

The inner core of a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beast could serve as a medicinal herb, the foundation of a formation, or even be complemented with one's cultivation technique to enhance one's cultivation. As such, it was an invaluable cultivation resource that could easily fetch a hefty price.

As for how the Great Violetwing Beast managed to grasp the aquatic spirit beast accurately, as long as the aquatic spirit beasts attempted to launch an attack, it wasn't too difficult to discern their flaws and track down their locations through the Library of Heaven's Path.

Just like that, in less than an hour, they had managed to kill 19 Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beasts and 25 Transcendent Mortal 7-dan spirit beasts, and a bucket of inner cores was gleaming in Zhang Xuan's storage ring.

"There don't seem to be too many Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beasts left in the lake. Let's head to the bazaar."

Eventually, the group circled the lake for a few rounds but were unable to find any prey. Thus, they could only end the hunt regretfully.

While there were many aquatic spirit beasts in the lake, those that had reached Transcendent Mortal 7-dan and 8-dan were still in the minority.

Besides, considering the huge massacre that had just happened, those remaining would surely be laying low so as to avoid the Great Violetwing Beast now.

Knowing that there was little point continuing on with the hunt, Zhang Xuan issued some instructions to the Great Violetwing Beast, and the latter flapped its massive wings and flew toward the vessel in the lake.

Not too long later, Zhang Xuan and Hong shi landed on the vessel.

The vessel was extremely big, possessing a diameter of several hundred meters. A huge, bustling crowd traversed to and fro the innumerable stalls laid out throughout the vessel. There were all kinds of resources available here, and customers could be seen haggling with the vendors everywhere.

"Those two are the ones who were hunting in the lake using the Great Violetwing Beast!"

"To regard the feared lake as his personal hunting ground... is that fellow really a freshman?"

"If he isn't a freshman, how could he possibly get in here?"

"Considering their flawless coordination, the Great Violetwing Beast is definitely his tamed beast. But that is exactly what that is confounding! Even though one's elders could assist with the taming process as well, it would still require both the beast tamer and tamed beast to interact with one another from young to achieve this level of intimacy... However, the Great Violetwing Beast is already beyond two hundred whereas that fellow has barely reached his twenties. This means that it is highly likely that he tamed the Great Violetwing Beast personally..."

"For a person who has yet to reach Transcendent Mortal 6-dan to actually tame a half 9-dan spirit beast... When did beast taming become so easy?"

...

News of the Great Violetwing Beast hunting in the lake had spread like wildfire across the bazaar. Thus, upon seeing Zhang Xuan and Hong shi, the crowd couldn't help but assess them in bewilderment.

Those who came to the bazaar were the most talented of master teachers from the various regions, and they possessed keen eyes. As such, they could tell that the Great Violetwing Beast was Zhang Xuan's tamed beast.

But... for a Consonant Spirit lad to tame a half 9-dan spirit beast, this was contrary to common sense in itself! They were unable to make sense of the situation despite wracking their brains frenziedly.

There was simply too huge of a gap between them, and they found it too difficult to accept it.

This was as if an ant had tamed a divine dragon. It was simply inconceivable!

After a moment of chatter, an explanation suddenly emerged.

"Most probably, the Great Violetwing Beast might have gotten injured, and he managed to win the other party's goodwill by saving it..."

"That's possible!"

It wasn't entirely impossible for a weaker beast tamer to tame a stronger spirit beast, but luck played a vital role in such situations.

"Humph! So he has just lucked out!"

Upon realizing this, their astonishment slowly vanished.

In the end, luck was nothing more than an external and uncontrollable factor. The winds of fortune couldn't possibly blow one's way all the time. In the end, one would still have to rely on one's own capability in the academy.

"Zhang shi, what should we do..."

Not expecting to stir up such a huge commotion, Hong shi couldn't help but feel a little nervous with so many eyes centered on them.

"Don't worry!"

With a chuckle, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out an inner core. Sweeping his gaze through the crowd, he shouted, "I am trading this Transcendent Mortal 7-dan spirit beast inner core for a suitable Consonant Spirit realm cultivation technique. As

long as it is suitable, I'll exchange it for the book!"

"A book for an inner core? Zhang shi..."

Hong shi's body swayed weakly from side to side, and he nearly fainted.

Wasn't this way too cheap?

They had only obtained a few dozen inner cores from the hunting earlier on, and if they were to exchange a single inner core for one book... putting aside how they would make a huge loss, they would only be able to gather a few of books like that!

"Are you serious?"

"As long as it is a Consonant Spirit realm cultivation technique manual, you are willing to exchange the inner core for it?"

Hearing those words, the eyes of the crowd immediately lit up even though they were still a little skeptical about the situation.

Ever since the establishment of the Master Teacher Pavilion, many cultivation techniques had surfaced in the world. Throughout the years, there had been many noble experts and master teachers who had contributed their own cultivation techniques to the public for the advancement of humanity. While these manuals weren't accessible to everyone, it wasn't too difficult for them, as master teachers, to access these books

In fact, many of the master teachers had studied these cultivation techniques and extracted their strengths to create their own unique skills.

Thus, even though these cultivation techniques might be valuable to the populace, they didn't mean much to master teachers. It was definitely in their favor if they could trade a single cultivation technique manual for a Transcendent Mortal 7-dan inner core.

"I vow on my honor as a master teacher that I mean my words. As

for Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation technique manuals, I am willing to trade for them with a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beast inner core!" Zhang Xuan replied.

"However, the prerequisite is that it has to be suitable for me. If it is not suitable, I won't make the trade. However, you need not worry. I can tell whether the manual suitable for me just by touching it, and I definitely will not open the book if it is not suited for me. Thus, you need not worry about exposing your cultivation techniques for free. In fact, even if it is suitable, I will return the manual right after flipping through it. I won't need the original copy, and I won't make any copies either!"

"If it is unsuitable, you will not open the book to look at it?"

"Even if it is suitable, you won't take the manual? You will give away a Transcendent Mortal 7-dan or 8-dan inner core just to flip through it?"

"This is truly a wonderful deal!"

...

Upon hearing Zhang Xuan's words, everyone's eyes immediately gleamed in agitation.

Initially, there were many who were hesitant because they were fearful of exposing their cultivation techniques to the world. However, the promises that Zhang Xuan made had alleviated their fears.

"I have a total of 22 Consonant Spirit realm cultivation techniques over here. You can take a look to see if there's anything suited in there!"

At that moment, a master teacher suddenly walked up, flicked his wrist, and passed a pile of books over to Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan brushed his finger over the books before eventually shaking his head. "My apologies, but none of your books are suited for me..."

"None of them are suited?"

Hearing those words, the master teacher couldn't help but feel a little disappointed. Shaking his head, he retreated back into the crowd.

After that person retreated, the crowd became even more agitated.

The other party wasn't lying! He had only touched the books, he didn't attempt to flip them open at all.

Surely there was no one so formidable as to determine the content of a book just by touching its exterior, right?

Since their cultivation techniques wouldn't be exposed to the public... what else was there for them to worry about?

"Allow me..."

The allure of the Transcendent Mortal 7-dan and 8-dan inner cores was simply irresistible. The crowd hurriedly whipped out their secret manuals and rushed forward.

Soon, a mountain of cultivation technique manuals was stacked before Zhang Xuan.

However, after brushing his finger across them... it turned out that only two of the entire stack were suitable...

Of course, Zhang Xuan had picked these two books out randomly to pass. Otherwise, if he were to refuse all trades, it wouldn't take too long for the crowd to lose their interest, and he wouldn't be able to continue his business.

Two hours later, Zhang Xuan stopped his business and declared, "My apologies, but I'll be stopping here today. Why don't you all return to search for whatever cultivation technique manuals you have? From tomorrow onward, I'll trade any Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation technique for two Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beast inner cores!"

He had gathered quite a few Consonant Spirit realm cultivation technique manuals in the Library of Heaven's Path, but the number of Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation technique manuals was still terribly limited. Thus, he could only up his stakes to see if he could attract more people.

Chapter 703 The Complete Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps

"Trading a cultivation technique manual for two Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beast inner cores?"

"If we really make that trade, we will be rich!"

"Indeed! Furthermore, he is only taking a look. I'll copy some of my sect's Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation technique manuals tonight and bring them over tomorrow!"

"I'll go as well!"

...

After hearing Zhang Xuan's promise, everyone's eyes immediately lit up with zeal. Some of the more excited ones even approached the two fortunate winners to study the type of cultivation techniques that Zhang shi had chosen.

"Let's go!"

Ignoring the excited crowd, Zhang Xuan glanced at Hong shi, and the both of them leaped up onto the back of the Great Violetwing Beast once more and flew back to their residence.

Seeing how Zhang Xuan departed on a mighty beast whereas they could only humbly return on a boat, they couldn't help but feel a little envious inside.

There was indeed a huge difference between people!

On the other hand, Senior Feng and the young man were on the verge of tears.

They had come to the bazaar in hopes of selling some of their possession. However, everyone's attention ended up being attracted by Zhang shi, resulting in no one sparing even a glance at the items they had laid out.

They felt so frustrated that they could spurt blood.

But there was nothing they could do. After Zhang Xuan and Hong shi left, they gloomily returned back to their residence as well and shut themselves in, not daring to head out anymore.

The heck! They had suffered so many traumas in just the past few hours... If this were to continue, they might just end up banging their heads on a pillar to end it once and for all...

...

Returning back to his room, Zhang Xuan compiled the Consonant Spirit realm's Heaven's Path Divine Art and cultivated it. With this, his zhenqi became even purer and more stable. After which, he organized the cultivation techniques so as to prepare a suitable simplified version to impart to his students.

Just as Zhang Xuan was done, Wang Ying also finally woke up from her breakthrough. With a clear demarcation between the clarity and the turbidity in her body now, she was overflowing with strength.

Seeing that Wang Ying was taking the lead yet again, Zheng Yang and Liu Yang immediately dove back into their cultivation, anxious to catch up with her.

Their teacher had a total of six direct disciples. Of the six, Zhao Ya had gone to the Glacier Plain Court whereas Lu Chong was currently seeking out the Ancient Domain of Soul Oracles. Now, even Yuan Tao was heading to the powerful Yuan Clan to inherit its heritage. If they didn't work hard now, they would end up lagging far behind the others!

Understanding the emotions they felt, Zhang Xuan patiently pointed out their flaws and how they could further improve.

By the time he was done, it was already late at night.

After a good night's rest, Zhang Xuan headed back to the bazaar the next day. There was already a huge crowd by the time he

arrived, and they had collected an ample amount of Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation techniques to trade with him.

Just like yesterday, Zhang Xuan randomly picked out a book and gave away two Transcendent Mortal 8-dan inner cores while rejecting the rest. Of course, he didn't forget to collect all of those books in his Library of Heaven's Path either.

In less than two days, he had already collected around seven hundred books. Even though it was still insufficient to form a complete Heaven's Path Divine Art, he wasn't too far from it.

After busying himself for the entire day, he left behind another promise to exchange the cultivation technique manual for three Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beast inner cores before departing, thus hyping up the crowd once more.

But even though the reward Zhang Xuan had offered was alluring, the amount of Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation technique manuals offered to him was decreasing swiftly.

As most of the freshmen were still at the Consonant Spirit realm, they didn't have too many Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation technique manuals on them. Not to mention, most of those at the bazaar had come from Tier-2 Empires, where Cosmos Bridge realm experts and cultivation technique manuals were relatively rare.

Thus, in the third day, Zhang Xuan only managed to gather two hundred books.

Nevertheless, with around nine hundred books at the moment, he wasn't too far away from his goal of one thousand.

In truth, one thousand was a just rough estimation. If the cultivation technique manuals he gathered were sufficiently advanced to cover all of the flaws present, he could still compile the Heaven's Path Divine Art regardless of whether he had a thousand books or not. Just as Zhang Xuan was about to give it a try, he suddenly heard an expectant voice.

"I don't have any cultivation technique manual, but I do have a battle technique manual... Can you take a look to see if it'll do or not?"

Raising his gaze, Zhang Xuan saw a young man looking at him expectantly. "I am truly in need of a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beast inner core, so I would be grateful to you if you can make this exception..."

"Battle technique?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback. "What kind of battle technique is it? Allow me take a look!"

"Alright!"

The young man flicked his wrist, and an ancient bamboo scroll appeared in his hands.

"This is a movement technique, but it is... incomplete..." the young man said embarrassedly.

He had received this ancient bamboo scroll coincidentally while he was undergoing a training session in the past. Initially, he'd thought that he had stumbled upon an invaluable treasure, but he swiftly realized that a huge chunk of the movement technique recorded in the scroll had been torn away or was illegible due to substantial damage, thus making it impossible to cultivate the technique.

Since he urgently required a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beast inner core to concoct a medicine at the moment, he decided to take it out in hopes that he might be able to interest the other party in the trade.

"A movement technique?"

Hearing that it was an incomplete battle technique, Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before reaching his fingers out toward it.

Weng!

An equivalent ancient bamboo scroll immediately appeared in

the Library of Heaven's Path.

After looking through the contents swiftly, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but shake his head.

This battle technique recorded was extremely high tiered, making it an invaluable battle technique. However, just as the other party had said, the battle technique was terribly incomplete. Not even the Library of Heaven's Path was able to fill up the holes to restore it, thus making it impossible to learn.

In other words... it was a useless scroll!

'You want to trade a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beast inner core with this? Surely you must be dreaming!'

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan was just about to turn down the other party's offer when a thought came to mind.

'It seems that this Cloud Treading Movement Technique bears quite some resemblance to the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps. I wonder if I can compile the both of them together...'

The Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps was a secret manual that he had obtained coincidentally from an elder in the Appraiser Hall back then. After compiling it with numerous movement technique manuals, he had gained the ability of flight despite not having reached Saint realm yet. However, there was a huge flaw in the technique—it consumed way too much zhenqi. If not for Zhang Xuan's incredibly pure Heaven's Path zhenqi, he might not have been able to even last for a short moment in the sky.

All along, Zhang Xuan had been trying to find a suitable battle technique to complement the final three flaws of the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, but the manuals he had access to were simply far too low tiered. Maybe... this incomplete manual just might be the key to it!

The more Zhang Xuan thought about it, the more convinced he became. Thus, he summoned the Red Dust Heaven Ascending

Steps manual over as well.

'Compile!'

With a silent mutter, light burst into the surroundings, and a new book appeared—the enhanced version of Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps.

"There are no more flaws?"

After checking the content, Zhang Xuan's eyes glowed in agitation.

After compiling the incomplete Cloud Treading Movement Technique along with the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, the three remaining flaws of the latter technique had finally vanished!

With the enhanced Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, he would be able to remain afloat for several hours without worrying about falling down!

In other words, his flight ability was already comparable to a Saint's. At the very least, he would be able to avoid the awkward situation of abruptly plummeting from the sky like many times before.

'This is wonderful!'

Zhang Xuan clenched his fists in elation.

This was a huge trump card. It would allow him to easily escape from anyone who hadn't reached Saint realm.

'It seems that even the incomplete manuals that others don't need can become useful to me as well. I can use them to complement the flaws of my compiled techniques. I should try to collect such items in the future too,' Zhang Xuan thought excitedly.

These ancient manuals were incomplete, making it unfeasible to cultivate them. However, through the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan could extract the correct verses from these manuals to

complement the missing gaps in his techniques, thus perfecting them.

"As fellow master teachers, it is only right for us to help one another. Your book might be useless to me, but since you urgently require a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beast inner core, I will give one to you!"

In a good mood, Zhang Xuan placed the ancient bamboo scroll in his storage ring and passed a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beast inner core over in exchange.

Just the fact that this ancient bamboo scroll could make up the flaws of the Parallel Heaven Scroll of the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps meant that it was well worth an inner core!

"Thank you..."

In truth, the young man didn't harbor great expectation in this matter, and he was just trying his luck. After all, he knew that the ancient bamboo scroll was incomplete and useless. Thus, upon hearing Zhang Xuan's words, his face immediately flushed agitatedly.

"Incomplete manuals work as well? I have two of them here..."

"I have an incomplete cultivation technique manual here..."

...

Seeing that Zhang shi was accepting even incomplete scrolls at a hefty price, a wave of enthusiasm washed through the crowd once more.

With many years of heritage, every single power possessed numerous incomplete cultivation technique and battle technique manuals. As these items were of no use to normal cultivators, they were often left untouched. To think that this fellow would actually trade inner cores for them... wasn't he a little too dumb?

In an instant, a mountain of incomplete manuals was stacked up

before Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan swiftly brushed his fingers through them, and a moment later, he shook his head.

While incomplete scrolls could indeed complement the missing gaps in the Heaven's Path Divine Art, it had to have some substance to it first. If the manual only contained superficial content, then it would be useless no matter how many of such manuals he collected.

A moment later, after gathering a few more cultivation technique manuals, Zhang Xuan realized that he wasn't much progress, so he decided to call it a day.

Heading toward a private chamber prepared in the residence, he instructed for others not to interrupt him before going into seclusion.

'I wonder if I can form the Cosmos Bridge realm Heaven's Path Divine Art...' Zhang Xuan thought as he sat down in the chamber.

He had gathered nearly a thousand Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation technique manuals already, and he had obtained quite a few incomplete manuals on top of that. Perhaps, he might be able to form a complete Transcendent Mortal 6-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art.

Thus, diving into the Library of Heaven's Path, he muttered "Compile!", and a moment later, a book was floating in front of him.

"The Cosmos Bridge realm Heaven's Path Divine Art... is flawless!"

Swiftly flipping through the book, Zhang Xuan burst out laughing from joy.

He'd thought that he would have to spend some time earning academic credits in the academy before he could compile a complete version of the Cosmos Bridge realm Heaven's Path Divine

Art, but the bazaar allowed him to accomplish this in advance.

With this, he would be able to successfully cultivate to Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator and boost his fighting prowess significantly!

'I should cultivate the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps first!'

Putting the Cosmos Bridge realm Heaven's Path Divine Art aside for the moment, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to the flawless Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps.

Having cultivated this technique once, it wasn't too difficult for him to master the complete version.

As Zhang Xuan circulated his zhenqi through his meridians, he felt his body grow significantly lighter and freer.

Boom!

After a period of time, as if a shackle tying down his body previously had been blasted open, Zhang Xuan felt his body becoming as light as a feather.

Hu!

The cross-legged Zhang Xuan slowly floated in the air, and he began drifting all around the room.

"As expected of the flawless Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps. The zhenqi consumption is indeed much lower than before..."

Sensing the zhenqi consumption from the utilization of the technique, Zhang Xuan's eyes gleamed in excitement.

In the past, zhenqi would gush out of Zhang Xuan's body as if a burst dam as soon as he utilized this technique. Despite possessing the incredibly pure Heaven's Path zhenqi, the zhenqi consumption from the execution of this technique was still extremely frightening to him. But at this moment, Zhang Xuan's zhenqi was flowing slowly as though a small stream by a village. At the current rate of consumption, he could easily maintain his flight for several

hours.

Not only so, the speed of his flight had increased considerably as well. Even though he was still far from a match for the Great Violetwing Beast, he had the confidence to catch up to Transcendent Mortal 6-dan aerial spirit beasts.

And more importantly, the flight speed would continue to increase along with the rise in his cultivation!

Just as Zhang Xuan was slowly returning to the ground to rest, an idea abruptly surfaced in his mind.

'I wonder if I can fuse the Heaven's Path Movement Art together with the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps...'

Since both the Heaven's Path Movement Art and Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps were both movement techniques, could they be fused together?

And if they could, what would be the result of it?

Curious, Zhang Xuan decided to give it a try!

Immersing his concentration in the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan placed the two books side by side.

"Compile!"

A new book appeared before Zhang Xuan's eyes.

"This..."

Taking a look at the contents, Zhang Xuan's eyes widened in astonishment.

Chapter 704 The Start of the Entrance Examination

However, the content of the book was completely nonsensical. Each line didn't follow from the previous line, making it impossible to comprehend at all. Just the sight of it left Zhang Xuan's eyes spinning.

"It seems like... I am underestimating the difficulty of this matter..."

Swiftly flipping through the book, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly and tossed it to the ground.

These two books were perfect on their own, and while it was possible to combine the books together, it only ended up introducing many flaws into the technique, making it impossible to cultivate at all.

To make an analogy, it was like mashing abalone, durian, loquat, watermelon, milk, chicken, salmon, and many other ingredients together... They were delicacies on their own, but when mixed together, the only logical decision one could make was to toss the entire pot away.

'It seems that while the Library of Heaven's Path can compile battle techniques to form a perfected manual, it is incapable of fusing perfected manuals together...'

Zhang Xuan shook his head in disappointment. A moment later, a thought suddenly appeared in his mind, and determination surfaced in his gaze. 'But while the Library of Heaven's Path isn't able to fuse the two manuals together, it should be possible for me to attempt it manually.'

The Library of Heaven's Path could sieve out the correct portion of a manual and combine them with many others to form a perfect manual, similar to how a cook sieves a bucket of flour to whip up

the best noodles. Putting two perfected manuals together would be no different from mixing two different types of flour together. Given the differing nature of the flours, if one didn't have anything to bridge the differences, it was inevitable that the quality of the noodles would drop.

It was the same in the case of Heaven's Path Movement Art and Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps. One was a flight movement technique whereas the other one was a land movement technique. With a fundamental difference between them, the result of the compilation of the two was bound to be plagued with problems.

But... while the Library of Heaven's Path was incapable of bridging the difference, it didn't mean that Zhang Xuan was unable to do so!

Despite the differences, they were still movement techniques. If Zhang Xuan were to succeed in compiling the two together, he would be able to enhance his flight speed significantly.

With such a thought in mind, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

'I should give try executing the Heaven's Path Movement Art in midair...'

A surge of hot blood gushed to Zhang Xuan's head, and without any hesitation, he took in a deep breath and leaped to the sky. While floating in the sky, he attempted to execute the Heaven's Path Movement Art to advance forward.

Putong!

But before he could execute the Heaven's Path Movement Art, the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Step which was holding him up in midair suddenly stopped operating, and his body suddenly plummeted down. With a dull thud, he crashed back onto to earth, creating a huge depression in the ground upon impact.

'This isn't right...'

With a face cloaked with dust, Zhang Xuan's complexion darkened.

He'd thought that this should be a simple feat, but reality couldn't be any further from his expectations.

Given the might of his soul, multitasking wasn't a problem for him anymore. However, both techniques required one's zhenqi to pass through the same meridians, and attempting to execute both simultaneously would result in a clash of zhenqi, thus canceling one another out.

And the result? A tragic fall from the sky.

It seemed like fusing battle techniques together was not as easy as he'd thought.

But thinking about it, if it was that easy to fuse battle techniques together, there wouldn't be a need for such thorough classifications within every class of battle technique.

'Or maybe I should try executing the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps in the midst of Heaven's Path Movement Art instead...'

Zhang Xuan didn't give up right after that failure. Instead, he contemplated for a moment before trying it once more.

Previously, he had executed the Heaven's Path Movement Art in the midst of his Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps. Perhaps, if he were to swap the order... he might be able to succeed.

While Zhang Xuan was busy trying to put both his battle techniques together, outside the room, Sun Qiang walked up to Zheng Yang, who was in the midst of practicing his spear art, and asked, "Where is the young master?"

"Teacher is currently in the midst of cultivating in seclusion, and he doesn't want anyone to interrupt him!" Retracting spear, Zheng Yang exhaled deeply, and a breath of white air drifted from his mouth.

In this period of time, while he had been trying to advance his cultivation, he hadn't slacked off on his battle technique training either. Under Zhang Shi's guidance, his comprehension of spearmanship had deepened significantly, and the might of his spear art had also become much more formidable.

In terms of cultivation, he might not be a match for Wang Ying. However, in a true fight, he would surely be able to stand his ground against the latter.

"Seclusion?"

Sun Qiang scratched his head. "Alright. If Young Master comes out of seclusion, tell him that I have already found appropriate living quarters, and we can move in anytime!"

"You have already found new living quarters?" Retracting his spear, Zheng Yang's eyes lit up.

The Academic Sea was filled with master teachers, and even though Hong Shi and the others hadn't said anything, they didn't feel comfortable living here.

"Yes, but it's not easy to find available residences in the vicinity of the Master Teacher Academy. I have found one with a small courtyard and a few rooms for the time being... I'm afraid that it'll be hard to find anything bigger than that. Even if we manage to find one, it is likely to cost an astronomical sum!" Sun Qiang said.

Countless young experts had gathered here to enroll in the Master Teacher Academy, and a significant proportion of them came from a wealthy background. Naturally, they would also attempt to find a lodging in the vicinity of the academy as well.

As a result, most of the residences in the area had been bought by them. As such, it was impossible to buy any even if they had the money. And even if that one happened to be free by chance, the prices would be driven to an astronomical sum by the great demand, thus making it impossible for them to acquire it.

After all... they were indeed rather poor at the moment.

"It's sufficient that we find a living quarter for the time being..."

Zheng Yang nodded.

"However, this isn't feasible in the long-term. We might be fine with living in such humble quarters, but what if the old master were to come and visit? How can we allow a noble 8-star master teacher live in such a small residence?"

Sun Qiang shook his head. "I think it will be better if I discuss with the young master to decide on what we should do about this matter..."

Sighing, Sun Qiang was just about to speak when a loud crashing sound echoed from the room ahead of them. It seemed like something had fallen heavily to the ground.

"Didn't you say that the young master is currently cultivating in seclusion? What is that sound then?"

Taken aback, Sun Qiang was just about to push the door open to find out what was going on when another dull thud sounded. The wall before them shook, and a head popped out from the wall.

"Teacher!"

"Young Master..."

Upon recognizing the face on said head, the duo was taken aback. However, before they could comprehend what was going on, 'sou!', the figure disappeared from their sight. Their respected young master and teacher suddenly flew backward abruptly and crashed into the opposite wall, creating a huge hole.

Peng peng peng peng!

Zhang Xuan went crashing all around like a rubber ball. Under the massive impact of his rapid movements, the fortified room suddenly collapsed inward.

Upon seeing this sight, Sun Qiang and Zheng Yang glanced at one

another, and their lips twitched violently.

'Didn't you say that you were cultivating?

'Then what are you doing crashing into those walls?

'What kind of cultivation requires you to knock yourself into a wall? Look at your face, it is already immensely swollen...'

Hu!

Just as they were staring at the sight before them with their mouths agape, Zhang Xuan suddenly shot out from the room and crashed into a huge tree in the courtyard head first, leaving his legs twitching uncontrollably outside.

"Teacher..."

Finally recovering from the shock, Zheng Yang hurried over to pull Zhang Xuan out from the tree, only to see the latter's face livid with frustration. "Teacher..."

"Young Master, we are just poor! There's no need to lose hope in life over a money issue..."

Sun Qiang also ran up to talk some sense into Zhang Xuan out of goodwill.

"Cough cough!"

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan's face darkened further. He hurriedly waved his hands and said, "I'll be going out for a moment! Sun Qiang, go and look for Hong shi to pay for the damaged properties..."

Ignoring the bewildered duo, Zhang Xuan leaped into the sky, and the Great Violetwing Beast immediately flew over. Soaring through the night sky, they headed to the city walls.

Given the size of his room in the Academic Sea, if he were to continue training there, the entire place could possibly be destroyed before he could successfully put the two techniques together. Thus, he decided to venture out to find a larger area

where he could train.

Not too long later, they arrived at a hill some distance away from Hongyuan City.

A bright moon hung in the sky, and a night breeze blew lightly. Birds and insects warbled harmoniously in the surroundings, creating a tranquil atmosphere.

'This is it!'

Crossing his legs, Zhang Xuan first recovered the zhenqi he had expended before turning his attention back to compiling his movement techniques.

Peng peng peng peng!

Very quickly, a loud thud, reminiscent of someone's head crashing into trees or boulders, accompanied with pained moans, echoed throughout the entire hill.

The incident would eventually grow to become a horror legend among the populace, as well as a tool for parents to warn children against venturing in the wilderness at night.

...

The next day...

"Is Zhang shi back yet?"

Hong shi paced around the room nervously.

When he'd heard the room collapse the previous night, he'd immediately rushed over. However, he'd only appeared in time to see Zhang shi disappearing in the horizon. He'd thought that the latter was only going out to cultivate for a moment, and he would be back very soon. Who could have known that he would be gone until now?

Today was the day of the Master Teacher Academy's entrance examination. If he were to miss it, he wouldn't be able to get into the academy!

"The young master left yesterday, and he isn't back yet..." Sun Qiang shook his head in confusion as well.

The young master had always been normal, so why did he suddenly go knocking his head on concrete yesterday as if suffering from a stroke?

Not only that, to actually stay out late after that... it couldn't be that he had given up on living!

Unable to stand it any longer, he turned to Zheng Yang and the others and asked, "Did any of you agitate Young Master last night?"

"We didn't..."

Zheng Yang and the others shook their heads, baffled by the situation before them as well. "Teacher only told us that he was going to cultivate in seclusion. We know nothing else other than that!"

They'd also been astonished when they'd heard that their teacher had gone around bashing his head into walls and trees last night, and this had left them deeply worried as well.

"What is going on..."

If he hadn't been provoked by anyone, why would the young master suddenly display such abnormal behavior? Sun Qiang fell into deep thought.

Just as he was wondering where he should go looking for the young master, the person-in-question suddenly returned cloaked in dust.

Judging from his appearance, it seemed like he had been rolling on the ground all night long instead of cultivating. If they didn't know better, they would probably have thrown him a few gold coins if they met him on the streets.

"Young master, you..."

Sun Qiang hurriedly rushed up in a ditz.

"I am fine!" Zhang Xuan shook his head. Turning to the elder standing behind him, he said, "Hong shi, let's go..."

"You are going to participate in the examination... in such a state?"

Seeing Zhang Xuan's state, Hong shi's lips twitched in shock.

'Other examinees would wash themselves thoroughly and don fresh clothes so as to leave a good impression with the invigilating teachers and elders.

'Yet, with an appearance that seems to suggest that you went out begging for alms last night, and your crimson eyes, a result of extreme fatigue... Are you sure you are ready for the examination?'

"It matters not!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands nonchalantly.

He had spent the entire night experimenting, and his zhenqi had been fully depleted five times. He had also crashed so much that he'd ended up a state of near death last night, and the result... was still a failure.

Putting two battle techniques together simply involved too many intricate details that made it impossible to refine swiftly.

Nevertheless, even though Zhang Xuan had yet to succeed, his control over the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps had grown significantly, allowing him to move at faster speeds. At the same time, his comprehension of battle techniques had also deepened from his trial and error, and this would serve him well in true battles.

However, it was a pity that his obstinacy in figuring out how to put the two battle techniques together last night had deprived him of the opportunity to cultivate the newly compiled Cosmos Bridge realm Heaven's Path Divine Art. As a result, he was still at Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle.

"Alright then, let's go..."

Hearing Zhang Xuan say that he was fine, and understanding how important the examination was, Hong shi immediately brought Zhang Xuan onto the aerial spirit beast prepared by the academy, and the duo quickly flew for Hongyuan Mountain Range's Leiyuan Peak.

Leiyuan Peak was only around two hundred kilometers away from the Academic Sea, so it didn't take them too long to arrive at their destination.

Nearly all of the freshmen had already arrived. From afar, the moving crowd resembled the waves of an ocean. It was truly an incredible sight.

"There is a higher number of freshmen taking the entrance examination this year, with the number at around thirty thousand. However, the academy is only accepting twenty thousand this year, so a third of the examinees will be eliminated!" Hong shi said with a suppressed voice.

"Eliminating a third of the freshmen?"

Zhang Xuan's lips twitched.

Considering that each of those present were the top elites of their respective regions, eliminating a third of them was truly fearsome. As expected of the Master Teacher Academy of a Tier 1 Empire!

Chapter 705 Betting!

The first time Zhang Xuan had seen so many master teachers was back when he was in Myriad Kingdom City. But even so, the number was only around a thousand or so. Yet, just the entrance examination of the Master Teacher Academy itself already involved thirty thousand 4-star pinnacle and half 5-star master teachers...

Just the thought of it was scary in itself.

But nevertheless, considering the circumstances surrounding Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, this was understandable.

This was the only Master Teacher Academy in this region. It accepted students that were not only from Hongyuan Empire but from other Tier 1 Empires as well.

Taking into account the dozen or so Tier 1 Empires and the countless sects and Master Teacher Pavilions they had in their region, it was natural that there were this many talented master teachers.

It was no wonder Tianxuan Kingdom was known as 'ancient ruins'. To not even have a single master teacher, it was indeed a backward location.

Feng shi, Luo shi, and the others walked up to Zhang Xuan and said, "We don't have any alliances with anyone in the entrance examination, so our team will be depending on you, Zhang shi..."

Even though they'd had several conflicts with Zhang Xuan in the past, considering they were from the same geographical region and the powerful competitors they would be facing in the entrance examination, they had decisively chosen to put aside their differences and unite together as one. This was the greatest hope they had in passing the entrance examination.

"Don't worry!"

Looking at the Huanyu Empire freshmen around him, Zhang Xuan nodded in assurance.

There was a total of fifty master teachers from Huanyu Empire that would be taking the entrance examination. Putting aside the top three from each Vassal State, the others were mainly 4-star pinnacle master teachers possessing a cultivation of Clarifying Turbidity realm.

With such cultivation, they were indeed considered mediocre within the group. Thus, for them to triumph over the competitors and pass the examination as a whole was, honestly speaking, very difficult!

This was precisely the reason they chose to ally with Tier 2 Jinhai Empire. Considering they were from a Tier 2 Empire as well, they'd thought that the strength of both teams would be roughly equal, so they should at least have been able to vie for an equal distribution at the very worst. Who knew that they would be completely defeated by the other party, and nearly turned into meat shields?

It was fortunate that Zhang shi arrived at that crucial period and saved them from that tragic fate.

But while they did manage to prevent the worst from happening, the crux of the problem still existed—their lack of strength. It was already too late to do anything else, so they could only put all of their hope in Zhang shi, and pray that he would be able to lead the group successfully through the entrance examination.

"You have our gratitude!"

Feng shi, Luo shi, and the others clasped their fists gratefully.

Thinking back on what they'd done to the other party, they felt extremely ashamed of themselves. Putting themselves into Zhang shi's shoes, if someone had treated him the way they did back at Huanyu Capital, they would surely have exacted vengeance during

the entrance examination and made things difficult for the examinees from the other Vassal States. However, Zhang Shi harbored no such vindictive thoughts at all.

In terms of magnanimity, they were truly nowhere near the other party.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony!" Seeing the expressions on their faces, Zhang Xuan chuckled light-heartedly, indicating that the past was the past. At that moment, a voice suddenly sounded from not too far away.

"Is this the man who defeated you?"

Turning around, Zhang Xuan saw a dark-skinned young man walking over with the defeated Senior Feng from Jinhai Empire following behind him.

The one who spoke was the dark-skinned young man in front. He had a tall stature, and his arms and legs were unusually long. His gaze was sharp and cold, as if a dagger was hidden in the depths of his eyes.

"Cosmos Bridge realm?"

Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

The other party didn't conceal his aura at all. The might of a Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator lingered around him as if the searing heat of a sun, exerting an immense pressure on the group.

At the Cosmos Bridge realm, a connection would be forged between one's consciousness and the world, granting one enhanced intimacy with nature. Even though a Consonant Spirit realm cultivator wasn't weak, it could hardly compare up to a Cosmos Bridge realm expert.

But while the young man had reached the Cosmos Bridge realm, the emblem pinned on his chest only had 4 stars.

Reaching the Cosmos Bridge realm was just one of several

prerequisites to becoming a 5-star master teacher. One had to have five 5-star supporting occupations as well as a Soul Depth of 15.0.

Often there were a couple of Grade 1 students who already possessed a cultivation realm beyond their current master teacher ranking, but due to their various other aspects being unable to catch up, they weren't qualified to be promoted to the next rank.

Clearly, the young man before him was such a case.

Nevertheless, he would still be a fearsome adversary.

To acquire such strength before thirty when he had yet to enter the Master Teacher Academy, he could be said to be ranked amongst the top even within the thirty thousand freshmen this year.

"Yes!" Senior Feng nodded.

"This..."

Hearing the other party's confirmation, the young man frowned.

He had been acquainted with Senior Feng for some time already, and knowing the latter's strength, he thought that a person who could defeat the latter should be at least a formidable Cosmos Bridge realm expert, but... this? What the heck?

Dirty as if he hadn't bathed for many days, exhausted to the point that his eyes were bloodshot, countless swelling marks on his face...

The other party had clearly suffered a tragic beating not too long ago...

More importantly, even though the other party was at Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle, he didn't feel exceptionally powerful either... With the other party's disposition and appearance, he wouldn't have spared the other party a second glance anywhere else.

Was this really the man who smacked the confidence out of his

good friend, leaving him in a slump?

Fearing that the other party wouldn't believe his words, Senior Feng hurriedly explained, "Brother Yu, don't underestimate Zhang shi. He... possesses extraordinary capabilities. He was able to defeat me with just a single finger!"

However, the more he spoke, the more uncertain he became.

Looking at Zhang Xuan's current state, he couldn't help but wonder if this was really the man who wounded him.

Why did it seem as if he had lost to a poor beggar?

"A single finger?"

Brother Yu shook his head. Turning to Zhang Xuan, he asked, "You are Zhang Xuan, Zhang shi? Since you defeated Feng Wu, may I challenge you to a match?"

"A match?" Zhang Xuan was just about to turn the other party away by claiming that he was busy when an idea suddenly struck him. With glowing eyes, he measured the other party from head to toe and asked, "What are you going to bet on the match?"

It just so happened that he was a little short on cash at the moment. Even renting a residence was difficult for him with his current finances. If he could earn some pocket change from a duel to tide him over this period, that would be for the best.

Sun Qiang hadn't had the time to clear away the artifacts he had obtained from the Mystical Treasure Hall before coming here, and there weren't any familiar faces in Hongyuan City that they could approach to fetch good prices for their items. As such, their funds were running extremely low at the moment.

"Bet?" Brother Yu was surprised by Zhang Xuan's words.

"That's right. What is the point of having a match if there is nothing on the line?" Zhang Xuan shrugged.

He wasn't interested in wasting his effort for nothing. If there

were no material gains to be earned from having a match, why should he waste his time?

Brother Yu's face darkened, and his eyebrows shot up in displeasure.

"You... Do you know what I want compete against you in?"

No matter what, they were all master teachers, respectable members of the society. To place a bet on a respectable contest between fellow peers was really a little too cheap!

'You are just a mere Consonant Spirit realm cultivator. It is one thing that you aren't afraid of me, but you don't even know what we are contesting in, and yet there you are talking about bets... Are you just that certain that you will be able to win?

'How far can your arrogance go!

'Presumptuous!'

His initial impression of this fellow already wasn't good, but at this moment, it had dropped to rock bottom.

Ignoring the other party's disdain, Zhang Xuan waved his hands nonchalantly.

"As long as you can offer something that interests me, I'm fine with anything you propose!"

"Since you're that confident, I'll fulfill your wish then!"

Harrumphing coldly, Brother Yu flicked his wrist, and a bunch of spirit stones appeared before him, "I have 1000 middle-tier spirit stones here. As long as you can defeat me, feel free to take them away!"

"1000 middle-tier spirit stones?" Zhang Xuan glanced at the pile of gleaming spirit stones.

"That's right! You have never seen so many spirit stones in your life, right? But you need not worry, I don't expect you to repay me should you lose... All of you have to do is to apologize to me before

all of the freshmen here for your disrespect," Brother Yu said with an air of superiority with his hands behind his back, emulating the disposition of a transcendental expert.

Considering how Huanyu Empire was below average compared to the other Tier 2 Empires, as well as the other party's shabby looks and attitude, it was clear that the other party was a poor bloke. To people like this, a thousand middle-tier spirit stones was probably a huge fortune, the like of which they had never seen in their lives before.

"Wait a moment..."

Seeing how the other party droned on and on, Zhang Xuan raised a hand to stop him. "Don't you think a thousand middle-tier spirit stones is too troublesome? Why don't we just go with one?"

"One? You call one middle-tier spirit stone a bet? Even the salary that I pay my subordinates is much more than that..."

Hearing the other party's suggestion, Brother Yu sneered coldly. But at that moment, he suddenly felt Senior Feng nudging him and pointing to Zhang Shi's hand. Perplexed, he turned his gaze over, and his eyeballs nearly popped out from his eyes.

There was a spirit stone in the other party's hand that was emanating a blinding radiance.

"H-h-high-tier spirit stone?"

Brother Yu's lips trembled, and his body shook weakly.

"Indeed, one high-tier spirit stone," Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

"..." Brother Yu's vision darkened, and he nearly keeled over.

Even for someone as rich as him, he only possessed middle-tier spirit stones. High-tier spirit stones were objects that only Saints were qualified to trade.

'To actually use a high-tier spirit stone as a bet...

'Are you sure that you are a Consonant Spirit realm cultivator

from Huanyu Empire?'

Given how shabby the other party looked, he thought that the other party would surely be a poor bloke. Who knew that he would suddenly whip out a high-tier spirit stone... What was with this huge contrast?

"Why? You don't have any high-tier spirit stone? If you don't even have the capital to make a bet, why are you bothering me? Go and play by the side, I don't have the time to be playing with you..."

Seeing the other party's frenzied expression, Zhang Xuan tutted in disdain.

'Why are you pretending to be wealthy when you don't even have a single high-tier spirit stone?'

Seeing the contempt on Zhang Xuan's face, Brother Yu and Senior Feng's faces darkened.

What the heck was this? They were here to humiliate the other party; how did they end up being the ones humiliated instead?

This was especially so with the other party's expression. It was as if he was snubbing them for being poor...

"Fine, let's bet on a high-tier spirit stone then!" Brother Yu flung his sleeves furiously and harrumphed.

"Sure, where is your high-tier spirit stone then? Show me. Otherwise, what am I supposed to do when you don't have the money to pay up? There are simply too many scammers nowadays!" Zhang Xuan said.

"You..."

Brother Yu clenched his fists tightly in anger. Thus, he turned to Senior Feng and said, "Take out your 'Aerial Strike Amulet'!"

"Brother Yu, that item..."

Hearing the other party's request, Senior Feng's eyebrows

immediately twitched. He quickly tried to turn the other party down.

"Don't worry, do you think he can defeat me?" Brother Yu placed his hands behind his back confidently.

"... Alright then!"

Recalling Brother Yu's identity, as well as the content of the examination, Senior Feng hesitated for a moment before eventually nodding in agreement. He flicked his wrist, and a jade token immediately appeared in his hands.

Brother Yu took the jade token and showed it to Zhang Xuan. "This Aerial Strike Amulet is an artifact forged by a Saint. It allows one to withstand a single attack from a Saint without sustaining any damage. Its value is definitely equivalent to a single high-tier spirit stone!"

"Aerial Strike Amulet?"

Zhang Xuan's finger reached out to touch the amulet before nodding in satisfaction. "This object is indeed worth a single high-tier spirit stone. Fine, I'll accept your bet!"

Seeing the other party agree to the bet, the edges of Brother Yu's lips crept up.

"Good. The winner of the bet shall be determined by... the results of the entrance examination!"

Chapter 706 Elder Mo

"Results of the entrance examination?"

Zhang Xuan frowned in bewilderment.

Weren't the only two results of the entrance examination pass and fail? What did the other party mean by comparing their results?

Just as Zhang Xuan was just about to ask the other party to elaborate, a powerful voice reverberated throughout the entire field.

"Quiet down!"

Everyone immediately stopped their chatter and raised their heads to look over. Following which, they saw an elder floating in midair.

"Saint..."

Zhang Xuan's body stiffened.

He could clearly feel the fundamental difference between his flight ability and the other's. The other party's flight ability was based on the world's recognition instead of a forceful levitation through the skillful utilization of zhenqi.

It was just like the difference between a flying bird and a balloon. The latter levitated due to the fundamental laws of physics whereas the former was dependent on the flapping of its wings. The moment it grows tired and stops its movements, it would immediately plummet to the ground.

Just like the flying bird, the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps required its user to continuously pump zhenqi into the technique in order to maintain flight. The elder before him clearly didn't belong to the same class, so the only explanation left was that he had reached Saint realm.

With a warm gaze from above, the elder said, "I am Mo Zhu, an elder of Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. I will be the chief invigilator for this entrance examination!"

"He is Elder Mo?" a freshman in front of Zhang Xuan exclaimed agitatedly, upon hearing the elder's introduction.

"Is Elder Mo very famous?" another freshman asked in confusion.

"Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy is famed for its Ten Great Master Teachers. The Ten Great Master Teachers are all 6-star pinnacle master teachers, as well as the ten most authoritative elders in the academy. They oversee everything that happens in the academy... and Elder Mo is one of them. Do you think that he is famous or not?" the first freshman said with a hushed voice.

"Ten Great Master Teachers?" The second freshman widened his eyes in shock.

Those who had heard of the Master Teacher Academy would surely have heard of the Ten Great Master Teachers as well. This title was determined via a selection process among the master teachers in Hongyuan Empire and the surrounding Tier 1 Empires once every fifty years. As the title was conferred directly by the superior Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion, the title was official and possessed true authority.

As such, the Ten Great Master Teachers possessed exceptional standing, and even the emperor of Hongyuan Empire would have to pay respect to them in the capacity of a student. They were also entitled to the most valuable of resources of the Master Teacher Pavilion.

There was no student who didn't take pride in becoming the student of any of the Ten Great Master Teachers...

He'd thought that such a formidable master teacher would surely be far away from him, but who knew that he would meet one before he had even officially enrolled into the academy?

The first freshman exclaimed agitatedly, "Indeed. Of the Ten Great Master Teachers, Elder Mo specializes in beast taming. But still, to think that he would invigilate the entrance examination personally..."

The Ten Great Master Teachers were legendary figures that most master teachers grew up admiring. Seeing the real person in the flesh, they could hardly curb the agitation they were feeling.

Even Brother Yu's eyes were glowing with excitement upon seeing Elder Mo.

"I believe everyone should already know the topic of the examination. I have placed many spirit beasts in Leiyuan Peak ahead of us!"

Interjecting into everyone's moment of excitement, Elder Mo continued with a warm smile, "All of those spirit beasts are aggressive beasts who have a track record of harming the innocent on numerous counts. I have confined them to the peak, and you are free to hunt them down as you like. As long as you slaughter a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle spirit beast and procure its inner core, I will consider you to have passed the examination!"

"Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle spirit beast?"

"Aggressive beasts who have a track record of harming the innocent?"

"This examination sounds extremely hard..."

Elder Mo's description was brief, but as master teachers, they were able to understand the crux of the matter in an instant. Within an instant, their excitement was replaced with unease.

Due to the superior physique that spirit beasts were born with, their fighting prowess was extraordinary. A Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle spirit beast could fight a Consonant Spirit realm master teacher on equal grounds, and even if things turned out to be disadvantageous, it was likely that it would be able to escape

safely.

Given that most of the freshmen involved in the examination were at Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle, it would be difficult for them to clear the examination!

Not to mention, considering the aggressive nature of the spirit beasts, they were bound to be difficult opponents to deal with. There was a vast difference between a spirit beast with vast fighting experience and a spirit beast with no fighting experience whatsoever.

'It is no wonder why most parties have chosen to form an alliance...' Zhang Xuan thought in realization.

He had been thinking that it was bizarre how the various parties chose to ally themselves with others for a mere hunt. After all, coordinating with another party was an extremely troublesome task. However, from the looks of it now, if they didn't do so, there was a good chance they could end up being surrounded and killed by the spirit beasts.

To think that even an entrance examination would be so dangerous... At this instant, Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled what Luo Qiqi had previously said about the Master Teacher Academy. It was indeed a competitive place where only those who could adapt would survive.

"The time limit is a single day. In other words, before sunset, you must return with the inner core in your hand. Only by fulfilling this criterion will you be considered to have cleared the examination! Otherwise... this will spell the end of your fate with the academy."

Elder Mo continued, "Also, I would like to warn everyone that the cultivation of the spirit beasts on the peak isn't just limited to Transcendent Mortal 4-dan. There are 5-dan, 6-dan, and even 7-dan spirit beasts there. Thus, you should be careful not to be slaughtered by the spirit beasts while hunting them down!"

The examinees had been informed of this in advance, so they weren't too surprised by Elder Mo's words.

Fighting prowess wasn't all there was to a master teacher. Master teachers were expected to be all-rounders who were capable in all fields, and this test sought to assess this.

After a moment of silence, a freshman suddenly asked, "Elder Mo, if we manage to slay a Transcendent Mortal 5-dan or 6-dan spirit beast, how will the results be tallied?"

"Good question!" Elder Mo stroked his beard. "We will be using a points system to gauge your result in the examination, and those who score higher will get to come under the tutelage of better teachers in the academy. In fact, if you perform outstandingly, there is a chance that you might win the favor of the elders!"

"Win the favor of the elders?"

Everyone's breathing hastened.

To be an elder in the Master Teacher Academy, one had to be a 6-star master teacher at minimum. Under the guidance of such a teacher, one's capability would surely soar.

At the same time, one would also be entitled to the best resources and highest standing.

"As for how points will be allocated, that's simple as well. It's a cumulative scoring system," Elder Mo said.

"Cumulative scoring system?" Everyone was slightly confused.

"That's right. You will be scored based on the tier of the spirit beasts you kill. A Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle spirit beast will award you with 1 point. A Consonant Spirit realm primary stage spirit beast will award you with 10 points, intermediate stage 20 points, advanced stage 30 points, and pinnacle 40 points! As for Cosmos Bridge realm spirit beasts, a primary stage spirit beast will award you 100 points, intermediate stage 200 points... so on and so forth!"

Elder Mo paused then said, "The more points one scores, the better one's results will be. Alternatively, one can also choose to share one's points with another to help them clear the examination.

"For example, if ten people work together to kill a Consonant Spirit realm primary stage spirit beast, these ten points can be equally distributed among them to allow the ten people to clear the examination together!"

"We can also clear the examination by killing a Consonant Spirit realm primary stage spirit beast in groups of ten?"

"That's great..."

Upon hearing the news, the eyes of the weaker freshmen immediately lit up, and they clenched their fists in agitation.

With their current strength, killing a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle spirit beast was extremely difficult for them. However, if they could coordinate with other master teachers and share the points earned, that would be a different story.

"It is for the purpose of driving away the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe that master teachers were born. To fulfill the responsibility we bear, not only must we be strong, we must also stand united and trust one another, working together to overcome all odds. This is crucial for the prosperity of mankind!" Elder Mo explained, knowing everyone's thoughts.

Hearing those words, the crowd couldn't help but nod in agreement.

'Master Teacher' didn't refer to an individual but an entirety. Only through teamwork and mutual trust would master teachers be able to bring out greater might.

"Alright, I shall move on to the rules of the examination now."

With a stern expression that seemed to be warning the freshmen against trying their luck, he said, "In this examination, you are not

to attack other examinees and steal their inner cores. In other words, you cannot lay your hands on other master teachers for the purpose of obtaining even more points. Once caught, you will be stripped of your enrollment qualification, and you will never be accepted into the academy for life!"

As Elder Mo spoke of his punishment, his voice suddenly grew so heavy that it felt as if the sky itself was pressing down on them, and the air felt so viscous that even breathing was a difficulty.

A Saint raged; the world shattered.

Just the slightest expression of his displeasure was sufficient to deprive all Transcendent Mortal realm cultivators of their will to defy him.

"We aren't able to attack other examinees and steal their inner cores?"

"Wasn't that allowed in the past?"

"It seems they removed that section from the examination due to the potential acrimony it could induce among peers!"

"Sigh, I was still thinking of stealing other people's inner cores to obtain a better result, but from the looks of it now... that is out of question!"

...

Spirit beasts were intelligent creatures. With so many people marching up the mountain to eliminate them, they would surely have hidden themselves well. As such, how could they be found easily?

Thus, quite a few of the stronger examinees had intended to prey on the weaker examinees to steal the fruits of their labor. Upon hearing that such behavior was not allowed, disappointment immediately surfaced on their faces.

However, an even larger proportion of the examinees heaved a

sigh of relief.

Defeating a spirit beast was no easy feat; there was a good chance they might be severely injured in the midst of doing so. If the product of their hard work was stolen by others, they would surely burst into tears.

"Elder Mo, I would like to ask if master teachers can use their tamed beasts to hunt down the spirit beasts?"

This time, it was Senior Feng who asked the question.

Upon hearing Senior Feng's words, everyone's eyes immediately fell upon Zhang Xuan.

After numerous days of trading cultivation techniques for spirit beast inner cores in the bazaar, he had become known by a large portion of the freshmen. Most of them were aware that he had tamed a half 9-dan Great Violetwing Beast.

If that fellow were to use the Great Violetwing Beast to hunt, who would be a match for him?

Overwhelming strength paired with the capability of flight, there would be no one who could compete with him!

"A tamed beast can be considered as part of the strength of a master teacher as well. However, examinees will only be allowed to use their tamed beast once throughout the competition. Other than the first inner core hunted by a tamed beast, any subsequent inner cores procured through such a method will not contribute to the examinee's score."

Being able to tame a spirit beast could be considered as a person's own strength as well. Nevertheless, if one were to rely completely on their tamed beast, that would be contrary to the purpose of the examination.

"Only once? That's good!"

Hearing those words, Senior Feng heaved a sigh of relief.

If Zhang Xuan could only use his tamed beast once, it would be impossible for him to win against Brother Yu.

After explaining the issue regarding the tamed beast, Elder Mo surveyed the surroundings and said, "Alright, are there any other questions? Do raise them so as to avoid infringing on the rules and losing your qualification!"

"Elder, what about grade-5 formation plates?" another freshman asked.

"The same rule applies for anything that is beyond one's cultivation realm. Just like tamed beasts, it can only be used once!" Elder Mo said.

Several more questions were asked, and Elder Mo answered each of them patiently.

Hearing the various rules and regulations of the examination, it was clear that the academy had put a lot of effort into planning the examination in order to accurately assess the strength of each examinee.

Seeing that there were no more questions, Elder Mo gestured to Leiyuan Peak and said, "Alright. If there aren't any more questions, the examination starts now. You can proceed up the mountain now!"

"Yes!"

Hearing the instructions, the thirty thousand participating freshmen immediately charged up to Leiyuan Peak.

The earlier they arrived, the higher the chance they would be able to successfully find and hunt a spirit beast. Thus, none of the examinees were willing lag behind the others.

Chapter 707 Start of the Hunt

"Zhang shi, don't forget our bet. Whoever who obtains the most points will be the victor!"

Seeing the crowd rush up the mountain, Brother Yu turned to Zhang Xuan and sneered before rushing up the mountain alongside Senior Feng.

Seeing the crowd rush along, Zhang Xuan glanced at Luo Xuan, Ruohuan gongzi, and the others and said, "Let's head on up as well!"

Only the examinees were allowed to be on the examination field, so the escorting members such as Hong shi weren't allowed to enter. They had to watch from outside the area. Thus, the examinees could only depend on themselves.

"Un!"

Luo Xuan and the others nodded.

"Let's head in that direction!"

Knowing that he was the leader of the group, Zhang Xuan scanned the surroundings, and his gaze eventually fell on a narrow valley. Pointing in that direction, he took the lead.

The other master teachers from Huanyu Empire followed closely behind.

Leiyuan Peak was actually relatively large in size. Putting aside the sharp cliffs, there was actually a lot of space to maneuver around. It was filled with innumerable gorges, boulders, and trees... Even an army of thirty thousand seemed insignificant against the entire peak.

The route which Zhang Xuan had chosen was one with very few people.

Even the weakest of the group was at Clarifying Turbidity realm

pinnacle, so the group traveled at an extremely fast speed. In just ten mere minutes, they were already deep within the mountain forest.

Perhaps it was due to the lush greenery filtering out the rays of the sun, but cold air seemed to permeate the entire mountain.

In the tranquil forest, there wasn't the slightest sound to be heard. Perhaps it was due to the earlier group driving away the beasts and birds, or perhaps the spirit beasts had gone into hiding knowing that master teachers were marching up the mountain to eliminate them, but the entire place seemed to be devoid of life.

"Zhang shi, where do we go now?"

By now, the group had been traveling for quite some time already. However, putting aside seeing a whole spirit beast, they hadn't even seen a single strand of spirit beast hair yet. As such, Luo Xuan and the others couldn't help but panic.

"Given the vast size of Leiyuan Peak, if the spirit beasts are intentionally hiding from us, it won't be easy to find them. However, there's no need to worry. I have been looking out for the tracks of the spirit beasts, and I have already noticed something..."

Zhang Xuan smiled.

Putting aside his identity as a master teacher, he was also a capable beast tamer who was proficient in the Ancient Beast Language. Not to mention, his Eye of Insight also allowed him to easily spot the slightest trails left behind by spirit beasts.

If Zhang Xuan were to seek them out seriously, it would be impossible for the spirit beasts to hide from him.

After advancing for a moment longer, Zhang Xuan suddenly came to an abrupt halt. He indicated for the group to remain silent, and with a flick of his wrist, he took out a sword.

Huala!

With a swift movement, a sharp, cold gleam flashed across the steep cliff before him.

Just as the group was bewildered as to what Zhang Xuan was attempting to do, a deafening explosion suddenly sounded, and the boulder before them shattered. Following which, a gray figure suddenly dashed out.

Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle spirit beast... Gale Wolf!

To think that this fellow would actually be hiding inside a boulder.

"I'll hand it over to you all. I'll check out the situation in front!"

Knowing that Luo Xuan and the others shouldn't have any problems with a spirit beast of this tier, Zhang Xuan chose to proceed ahead to scout around first.

The route ahead was tilted upward. Even though the route rather steep, it was fortunate that there were many plants around to serve as a stepping stone. Soon, Zhang Xuan had already covered a distance of seven to eight kilometers.

Hu!

Suddenly, Zhang Xuan came to a halt, and a deep frown appeared on his forehead.

"These marks indicate that a group of spirit beasts have passed through this area..."

Even though there were no clear marks on the field before him, Zhang Xuan was still able to easily tell that a group of beasts had just passed the area not too long ago through his Eye of Insight.

"Bluebacked Ferocious Bear, Steelfang Panther, Southern Yellow Tiger, Metal-arm Ape... Those are spirit beasts that specialize in speed! Furthermore, all of them have reached Consonant Spirit realm!" Zhang Xuan deduced, after a moment of observation.

Different spirit beasts would leave behind different trails. Of the

beast horde that had passed through this area, he was able to identify at least a dozen of them.

These spirit beasts were usually the nemeses of one another, and yet they were actually traveling together. Most probably, just as Elder Mo had said, they had begun working together to stand against the humans.

"Zhang shi..."

Just as Zhang Xuan was trying to figure out the direction in which the spirit beasts were heading, Luo Xuan and the others finally caught up with him.

To them, a Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle spirit beast didn't pose as a challenge at all. They were able to kill it swiftly.

However, their group was simply too big. Killing a Clarifying Turbidity realm spirit beast didn't do much to help them as a group.

"Everyone, lower your voices. Let's go for a big one!"

Zhang Xuan smiled mysteriously.

More than a dozen Transcendent Mortal 5-dan spirit beast had passed through this area. This was an opportunity as much as a threat.

If they could get rid of all of them, they would gain sufficient points to pass the examination.

If it was any other team or alliance, they would surely avoid clashing with such a large group. However, Zhang Xuan was different. His cultivation had reached Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle, and his fighting prowess far exceeded his peers. If he wished to, he could easily destroy the entire group of spirit beasts.

"Go for a big one?"

Having only just arrived, everyone in the group was unable to comprehend what Zhang Xuan was getting at.

"Un. Based on my observation, a group of Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts have just passed through the area. As long as we can slaughter them, we should be able to gain sufficient points for all of us to clear..." Zhang Xuan chuckled.

"Consonant Spirit realm spirit beast?"

Everyone's eyes immediately beamed with excitement.

A single Consonant Spirit realm primary stage spirit beast was worth ten points, so they only had to clear away five of those to earn sufficient points for all of them to clear the examination.

As for the danger involved, didn't Zhang Shi have a half 9-dan tamed beast? If put in a critical situation, he could simply summon the Great Violetwing Beast to save them...

"Follow me!"

Having come to a decision, Zhang Xuan immediately led the group down the trail the spirit beast horde had gone through.

A moment later, he suddenly stopped.

"Something is wrong..."

Ruohuan gongzi walked up and asked, "What's wrong?"

"There are signs of a formation being set up just ahead, but there are no signs of battle at all..."

Zhang Xuan frowned.

"What does that mean?" The group seemed unable to follow what Zhang Xuan was saying.

"If there are signs of a formation being set up, it can only mean that... someone has prepared an ambush ahead! However, if there are no signs of battle, it can only mean that the spirit beasts noticed the trap and avoided it," Zhang Xuan explained.

"Spirit beasts possess an innate sensitivity to the disturbances in the spiritual energy in their environment. They might have sensed

the presence of the formation in advance and avoided it," Luo Xuan interjected.

Spirit beasts possessed far sharper senses than humans. It shouldn't be anything much for them to notice and avoid a formation!

Zhang Xuan shook his head.

It wasn't as simple as Luo Xuan had said.

"This is a grade-5 Greencloud Illusion Formation. This formation is known for its inconspicuousness when inactive. Even a Consonant Spirit realm master teacher would find it hard to notice this formation even when passing through this area..."

Even though the other party had already removed the formation, with his eye of discernment, he was still able to tell what kind of formation it was.

The Greenmist Formation was known for its ability to conceal itself, and without the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan would've found it hard to notice it as well, needless to say a group of spirit beasts!

He didn't believe that a group of Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts would possess a sharper eye of discernment than him.

"What is going on?"

Hearing that it was the Greenmist Formation, everyone immediately realized the bizarreness of the matter, and a deep frown appeared on their foreheads.

"I don't know either... But in any case, let's proceed forward to see what they are up to."

Zhang Xuan wasn't able to understand what was going on, but considering that the spirit beasts hadn't left too long ago as judged from the fresh trails, he was certain he'd be able to figure out what was going on by following them.

"Alright!"

The others nodded and followed behind.

Just like that, the group proceeded on for another ten minutes before Zhang Xuan stopped once again.

Seeing the perplexed expression on Zhang Xuan's face, Ruohuan gongzi walked up and asked, "What is it?"

Taking in the faint scent lingering in the air, Zhang Xuan said, "Someone tried to use a 'Crimson Blood Pill' as a bait for the spirit beasts earlier on, but... the spirit beasts ignored the bait completely..."

"Crimson Blood Pill?"

"Yes, it's a grade-5 pill. Logically speaking, it should be irresistible to the Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts..." The more Zhang Xuan thought about it, the more bewildered he became.

Zhang Xuan wouldn't have been surprised if the spirit beasts could hold themselves back from any other bait, but this was the Crimson Blood Pill! Once consumed, it could induce a Bloodline Evolution in them. This was a rare opportunity for them to further raise their cultivation, and yet they still managed to hold themselves back. This was extremely unlikely.

Spirit beasts possessed intellect, but they were still primarily governed by their primal instincts. If they were capable of accurately discerning and avoiding traps, the number of tamed beasts in the world would surely be several times lower than it currently was.

It might be a coincidence that the spirit beasts managed to avoid the formation, but it would be going too far to call this a coincidence as well. There was something truly suspicious about this situation.

"What is even more doubtful is that the master teachers who set up the formation and prepared the Crimson Blood Pill bait are missing too!" Zhang Xuan continued.

Luo Xuan narrowed his eyes in astonishment.

"Missing? Could it be that... they have been killed?"

If the spirit beasts were strong enough to slaughter groups who were in possession of a grade-5 pinnacle formation and pill, the Huanyu Empire group would likely be unable to do any better against them either.

"That's not it. If a battle had occurred, traces would surely have been left behind. Putting aside a group of Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts, even if there were Transcendent Mortal 9-dan spirit beasts here, it would still be difficult for them to slaughter an entire team of master teachers without leaving behind any traces!"

Zhang Xuan shook his head.

All of the examinees taking the examination were elites among the master teachers. Given their talents, their homelands would surely have been more than willing to provide them with the best of resources to groom them. Naturally, they would definitely have some life preservation means on them too.

With their life preservation means, even if the group of Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts had ambushed them, they should still have been able to escape without any trouble.

"This..." Everyone was starting to feel unsettled by the bizarre situation before them.

"If I am not mistaken, they must have noticed the spirit beasts and are tracking them at the moment..." Zhang Xuan revealed his deductions.

"Tracking them?"

"Un, this is the only logical explanation. Otherwise, there is no reason why the formation we saw earlier would be dismantled so cleanly, and there are no marks of battle around," Zhang Xuan rationalized.

Ruohuan gongzi suddenly realized the incongruity in the entire story.

"That doesn't make any sense. If the spirit beasts did notice the traps in advance and steered clear of them, they definitely would have left quietly so as to avoid alarming the master teachers. Furthermore, given that they were aware of the presence of master teachers in the area, how could they remain unaware if a group were to follow them?"

"That is precisely what that left me baffled!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Once the spirit beasts noticed the formations, for their own safety, they would surely leave silently so as to avoid alarming the master teachers.

It was already surprising that one group would actually notice them, but now there were two... It was as if the spirit beasts were intentionally revealing their tracks so that the master teachers could find them.

The entire situation reeked of a scheme.

"We should continue following them to take a look..."

Knowing that they wouldn't find an answer by standing around, Zhang Xuan looked around and continued following the trail of the spirit beasts.

The others also followed behind.

In the next hour, the group circled a large round along the peak, and they noticed quite a few ambushes as well. From time to time, there were traces of battle too.

However, judging from the marks, it seemed that the spirit beasts had retreated immediately after encountering the master teachers. With their superior agility, they were able to get away easily as well.

Chapter 708 To Rescue or Not to Rescue

"Perhaps they feared trouble, so they left immediately after noticing that they were followed?" Luo Xuan suggested.

"That's possible." Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

At that a moment, a member of their group suddenly exclaimed, "There are a few people in front!"

The group immediately turned their gazes forward and saw three freshmen sitting feebly on the ground. They had sustained significant injuries, and blood was flowing from their wounds.

The trio were all Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle cultivators. Upon seeing such a huge crowd, their faces immediately paled in fear. "We haven't caught any spirit beasts yet..."

But soon afterward, they recalled that fellow examinees were not allowed to steal from one another, and they heaved a sigh of relief.

"I've met these people before. They are from the Luoyuan Empire's party!" Luo Xuan informed Zhang Xuan telepathically.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

Just like Huanyu Empire, Luoyuan Empire was a Tier 2 Empire as well, and both parties lived in proximity to one another in the Academic Sea. As such, Luo Xuan was able to recognize the trio easily.

"Did your injuries come from the spirit beasts?" Zhang Xuan asked the trio.

Knowing that he meant no hostility, the trio answered truthfully, "Yes!"

"It shouldn't be difficult for the dozen Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts to kill you. How did you manage to escape from them?" Zhang Xuan asked.

If the dozen Consonant Spirit realm spirit beast were to charge at the trio simultaneously, they would probably be dead in a breath.

There should be no reason for the spirit beasts to leave those who had come to slaughter them alive.

"H-how did you know that we were attacked by a dozen Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts?" one of the three master teachers asked in astonishment.

"We are tracking that pack," Zhang Xuan replied.

"I see. I am not really sure what happened either. We were just walking around when we suddenly encountered the pack. To be honest, we thought that we would be goners, but for some reason, those spirit beasts suddenly left in a panic after a brief encounter, as if they were scared of something..."

"Perhaps they were afraid of you catching up to them?" another one of the trio added.

Zhang Xuan and the others had arrived not too long after the spirit beast pack left, so they might just be apprehensive about staying for too long.

"But nevertheless, all they require is a brief instant to get rid of three Transcendent Mortal 4-dan master teachers. Furthermore, if they really noticed that we were tracking them, they would surely be filled with hostility toward humans. There's no reason for them to show mercy to them..."

The more Luo Xuan thought about it, the more doubts surfaced in his mind.

Assuming that the spirit beast pack was indeed escaping from them, if they were to meet other humans in the midst of their escape, there was no reason for them to spare them, especially since a brief instant was all it would take. How could the trio possibly be able to get away alive?

Frowning, Zhang Xuan continued questioning them.

"Where does the path ahead lead to?"

"It leads to Heaven's Thread, one of the most dangerous gorges of Leiyuan Peak," replied one of the master teachers.

"A canyon? This is bad..." Seeming to have thought of something, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows suddenly shot up. He hurriedly rushed forward to the canyon, and the baffled crowd quickly followed behind.

Not too long later, they arrived at a massive gorge surrounded by steep cliffs. Looking up from below, the sky looked just like a thin thread. Somehow, an ominous feeling slowly spread across the group.

Ding ding ding ding!

Before they even walked into the gorge, they could already feel a massive disturbance in the spiritual energy ahead, and the sound of weapons clashing reverberated in the air.

"There is a battle going on over there..."

With these signs, how could the group still remain oblivious to what was going on ahead of them?

Zhang Xuan pointed forward.

"The answer to the mystery lies ahead..."

There were numerous large floating rock platforms around the gorge. Climbing to a high altitude, the group caught a clear glimpse of the battle ahead, and their faces were immediately drained of color.

Two hundred master teachers were tightly encircled by several hundred spirit beasts.

The cultivation of these spirit beasts ranged from the Consonant Spirit realm to the Cosmos Bridge realm, and every single one of them was incomparably powerful. Even though the surrounded master teachers weren't weak, their opponents were simply too

powerful, and they were outnumbered at that. As time went by, more and more master teachers were being incapacitated by grievous wounds.

"Could it be that the dozen spirit beasts were intentionally luring the master teachers over... so as to eradicate them all in a single sweep?"

Upon realizing this fact, the mouths of the group twitched in astonishment.

Even if the entire Huanyu Empire party were to head down to offer their support, they wouldn't be able to turn the tides of the battle. They would only end up contributing to the casualty toll.

Furthermore, as the name Heaven's String suggested, the gorge was extremely narrow, not to mention that it was filled with numerous floating rock platforms of various sizes, thus making it difficult for the Great Violetwing Beast to maneuver around. It would be dangerous for the Great Violetwing Beast if it were to be attacked by the army of spirit beasts under such circumstances.

Zhang Xuan's face was extremely grave.

His high Soul Depth granted him a far greater analytical ability compared to the other members of the group. When he first noticed the presence of the spirit beast pack and the situation surrounding them, a seed of doubt had already been planted in his mind. From the looks of it now, it was indeed a huge set-up!

Bluebacked Ferocious Bear, Steelfang Panther, Southern Yellow Tiger, Armmetal Ape... These spirit beasts were known for their speed on land. If they were to go at full speed, even a Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage master teacher would find it hard to keep up with them. And yet, they went through the trouble of circling around the peak and drawing in group after group of master teachers. It was clear that they were up to something.

Yet, Zhang Xuan hadn't expected that the spirit beasts were

luring the humans into a trap to eliminate them!

"The spirit beasts are in an alliance as well..."

The master teachers had been thinking of allying with one another to hunt the spirit beasts, but little did they know that the spirit beasts were doing the same as well. They had organized themselves orderly with a clear role for each spirit beast in the team. Some would serve as bait while others would lie in ambush to receive the prey. With this, they intended to wipe out a large group of master teachers in a single move!

Fearsome!

If they were put in the same circumstances, would they have fallen for the scheme as well and landed themselves in grave danger?

One of the master teachers turned to Zhang Xuan and asked worriedly, "Zhang shi... What should we do?"

As master teachers, they couldn't simply watch idly as their comrades were being killed in battle... but even if their entire group were to offer their support, it would still be insufficient to defeat the spirit beasts!

"The main purpose of a master teacher is to protect humanity. Even in the face of danger, we must fight to ensure the survival of mankind... If we were to leave our comrades in such a situation, even if we successfully escape with our lives, we won't be able to live with the guilt, and our faith will be shaken. This will surely weigh us down in the future, limiting our accomplishments!"

"But... given the current circumstances, even if we do lay down our lives to save them, nothing will change at all!"

"That's right. This is truly a dilemma..."

Everyone fell silent.

With their current fighting prowess, it would surely be

impossible to rescue the master teachers from the clutches of the spirit beasts. But if they chose to leave them in a deadly situation, the guilt would shatter the morals they had stood by and believed in for their entire lives.

"There is no doubt that we have to save them, but charging straight in will not work," Zhang Xuan said with a deep frown. Tapping on his thigh with his finger, he fumbled through his head to search for a solution to the crisis.

"What do we do?"

The helpless crowd turned to Zhang Xuan to lead them.

They had pinned all of their hopes on this young man, hoping that he could produce a miracle as he always did.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan turned to the crowd and asked, "Does anyone here have the formation flags and blueprint of a 5-star Beguilement Formation?"

"I do!"

One of the Luoyuan Empire master teacher raised his hand.

The only reason the trio dared to operate in such a small team was due to his ability as a formation master. Otherwise, given their Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle cultivation, how could they possibly dare to leave the group on their own accord?

"Pass it to me."

Zhang Xuan stretched out his hand.

"Alright!"

Knowing that this was a critical situation, the master teacher flicked his hand, and a stack of formation flags and a jade token appeared in his hands.

"This is a grade-5 primary 'Illusory Footsteps Beguilement Formation'. It was created by a great Formation Master Tao Ran from our empire when a stroke of inspiration struck him while he

was studying the waves. However... this formation is extremely troublesome to set up, and even after studying it for three years, it still takes me two hours at minimum to set up a workable formation. Furthermore... considering how narrow the gorge it, I'm afraid that it is nigh impossible to set it up," the Luoyuan Empire master teacher said.

Even if he were to set up this formation personally, it would be difficult for him to succeed without spending two hours on it. More importantly, setting up a formation required one to study the geographical terrain and measure the flow of spiritual energy in the air using a geomantic compass. All in all, it was an extremely complicated process.

Considering the intense battle below, putting aside whether it was possible to set up the formation or not, it was a huge question in itself whether the master teachers could last that long against the ferocious assault by the spirit beasts!

More importantly, how was the formation supposed to be set up? To set up the formation, Zhang shi would have to head down to plant the flags. However, if he were to do so, he would be putting himself in the midst of the spirit beast encirclement as well!

There were surely plenty of formation masters among the two hundred master teachers below as well, but even they were helpless against this situation. What could he possibly do?

"Let me take a look first."

Ignoring the other party's doubts, Zhang Xuan touched the jade token with the tip of his finger, and the blueprint of the Illusory Footsteps Beguilement Formation immediately came into sight.

'Flaws!'

Muttering silently, Zhang Xuan's eyes remained fixated on the jade token while his consciousness had already dived into the Library of Heaven's Path.

The Illusory Footsteps Beguilement Formation was created by Formation Master Tao Ran from Luoyuan Empire. Through utilizing the geographical terrain of the surroundings, it was able to trap all lifeforms in the area of the formation and confuse them. Once activated, even a Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator would find it difficult to escape from the formation.

It only took Zhang Xuan a few breaths to grasp the important details regarding the formation through the Library of Heaven's Path.

When he finally opened his eyes once more, he turned to the crowd and asked, "Do any of you have spirit stones on you now?"

Everyone nodded in response to the query.

"Spirit stones? We do have some with us now!"

Even though middle-tier spirit stones were valuable, most 4-star pinnacle and half 5-star master teachers would still keep some with them at all times.

"Take them out, I need each of you to be holding ten spirit stones. If you don't have enough, borrow from someone else," Zhang Xuan instructed.

"Alright!"

Ten middle-tier spirit stones were still within their means, so they had no problem taking this sum out.

"Other than me, we have a total of 52 people. Split yourself into four teams, namely North, South, East, and West!" Zhang Xuan continued instructing.

Even though they had no idea what Zhang Xuan was up to, there was nothing else they could do at the moment other than follow his instructions.

As master teachers, they were extremely efficient. In just a few breaths, they were already done dividing themselves.

With a grim expression, Zhang Xuan instructed seriously, "Alright, prepare yourselves. Make sure to follow my orders strictly later on. The slightest mistake can spell the failure of our operation. If that is the case, we won't be able to save the master teachers below..."

"Zhang shi, don't worry!"

"We will listen to your arrangements!"

Even though the crowd still had no idea what Zhang Xuan was up to, the latter's previous deeds, as well as his confident and firm gaze inspired trust in them.

The three master teachers from Luoyuan Empire harbored some doubts about Zhang Xuan's credibility, but after seeing the reaction from Huanyu Empire's party, they could only swallow their words. They couldn't help but reassess the young man before them.

This young man was the youngest among the group, but why did everyone possess such deep trust in him?

In their eyes, unless an expert of Elder Mo's caliber were to arrive on the scene, there was no way they could break out of this dire situation!

Did this fellow... really have a feasible idea in mind?

Chapter 709 Hundred Flags of Void Sealing

Before the doubtful gazes of the three master teachers, the young man stared intently at the land below with the formation flags in his hand, seemingly calculating the positioning of the flags.

"Zhang shi intends to set up the Illusory Footsteps Beguilement Formation?"

Seeing his actions, the eyebrows of the three master teachers shot up in astonishment.

Putting aside how narrow the gorge was, just the battle below was sufficient to cause immense chaos in the spiritual energy in the air. Even with a compass in hand, it would be impossible for one to accurately read the flow of spiritual energy. As such, how could one possibly set up a formation?

Even if a 7-star formation master were to arrive on the scene, he would surely be unable to successfully set up a formation as well!

More importantly, the moment the first formation flag was planted on the ground, the spirit beasts would surely notice them. Considering the number of spirit beasts in the gorge, even if just a small proportion were to come after them, they would still become goners!

Was this really the idea he had in mind?

Sensing the nervousness in the trio, Ruohuan gongzi said with a consoling smile, "There's no need to panic. Since Zhang shi says that it is possible to rescue them, he must have a feasible idea in mind!"

Of the entire group, he had known Zhang shi the longest, and he also boasted the greatest understanding of the latter. This young man seemed to possess some kind of incredible power. So many times, what he viewed to be impossible had been easily accomplished by the other party.

Taking the Otherworldly Demon in the Master Teacher Tournament as an example, he actually managed to talk it into committing suicide... This was a feat that many could not even imagine, but he actually achieved it!

In fact, the very reason he could be here despite his lacking capability was due to the young man's help.

Thus, even though the situation before them might look hopeless, it didn't hinder him from believing in the young man's ability to turn the tables.

"Let's just hope so..."

The trio could only reply with bitter smiles.

While they were talking, Zhang Xuan had already finished examining the geographical terrain. Taking a deep breath, he suddenly sent a telepathic message to everyone.

"Prepare yourselves!"

Hearing those words, everyone immediately gathered their attention as they waited for Zhang Shi's further instructions with the middle-tier spirit stones in their hands.

Hu!

Just as they were wondering what the young man would do, they suddenly saw the other party leaping down from the platform, headed toward the battlefield between the spirit beasts and the master teachers.

"This..."

Alarmed by Zhang Xuan's actions, everyone narrowed their eyes in shock.

Hundreds of powerful spirit beasts were prowling ferociously below! To charge in like that, are you sure you aren't attempting to commit suicide instead?

Roar! Roar! Roar!

As expected, upon noticing Zhang Xuan's presence, the spirit beasts immediately howled furiously. Following which, a ferocious string of attacks rained down on him like a frenzied storm.

These attacks harnessed an immense force which could threaten even a Transcendent Mortal 7-dan expert.

Hu!

Just as the crowd thought that Zhang Xuan was done for, the young man's path of trajectory suddenly mysteriously shifted three chi (10cm) to the right.

A mere three chi, but it caused all of the attacks to fly past him.

Roar!

The unsuccessful primary assault seemed to have provoked even more spirit beasts. With another wave of deafening battle cries, dozens of attacks suddenly came from all directions.

It was slightly different this time around.

In the first assault, the spirit beasts had harnessed their full might to crush the defenses of their opponent. On the other hand, this wave of attacks was scattered in all directions to seal their opponent's escape route.

"These attacks aren't sufficient to deal any grievous injuries to Zhang shi, but their force is sufficient to push him to the ground. Once Zhang shi falls to the ground, he will immediately fall into the encirclement of the spirit beasts. By then, it will be difficult for him to escape with his life, let alone, rescue the others..."

Many master teachers clenched their fists tightly in agitation.

The attacks from the spirit beasts weren't sufficiently powerful to kill a Consonant Spirit realm cultivator, but the force of the attacks could send Zhang Xuan plummeting to the ground. Once he fell to the ground... just the weight of the spirit beasts itself could squash him to death.

"Look!"

Just as everyone was worried, someone suddenly shouted, and the crowd turned their gazes over. With a single look, they were all dumbfounded.

Through stepping on the floating rock platforms, Zhang Xuan was able to alter his movements in air. For some reason, it was as if he could predict where the attacks would come from.

At each crucial moment, he would move ever so slightly, and the attacks would pass him by. It was an incomparably dangerous situation each time, but he would always escape completely unharmed.

"This fearsome calculation ability, and this frightening eye of discernment!"

The crowd above narrowed their eyes.

As master teachers, they clearly understood how difficult this feat was. One had to be familiar with each of the spirit beasts' habits, attacking patterns, movement speeds, strengths... Only with a thorough and accurate understanding of each and every aspect of the spirit beasts could one make such precise predictions!

In other words, in that brief moment that Zhang Xuan was examining the situation, not only did he calculate the locations of the formation flag, he even thoroughly predicted the various possible attacking trajectories of the spirit beasts and planned his path of descent!

Otherwise, how could he possibly maneuver around so smoothly and adeptly in the midst of that huge torrent of attacks?

How formidable must his eye of discernment be? How powerful must his mental calculation capacity be?

Was this still humanly possible?

Hu hu hu!

Oblivious to everyone's shock and frenzy, Zhang Xuan adeptly maneuvered around the spirit beasts, and around ten breaths later, he finally arrived at the space in the direct center of the gorge, right above the fighting master teachers and spirit beasts.

"Go!"

Weng weng weng!

The hundreds of formation flags which he held in his hands suddenly buzzed sharply, and 'sou!', they flew into the surroundings.

"T-this... Isn't this the ability that only 7-star formation masters are capable of utilizing... 'Hundred Flags of Void Sealing'?"

The master teacher who passed the formation flags and jade token to Zhang Xuan earlier on turned pale, and he nearly fell from the floating platform from fright.

"Hundred Flags of Void Sealing? What is that?"

However, most of the master teachers present were unaware of what it represented.

After all, this was technical jargon used only by formation masters, so most of those who hadn't learned this occupation were unaware of it.

"Rumor has it that the psyche of a 7-star master teacher is so powerful that even without a compass, they can accurately determine the spiritual energy intersection points where each flag should be placed. Thus, by throwing the flags to their respective position simultaneously, they can set up a formation instantaneously... B-but how can he possibly do it as well?"

The lips of the master teacher were trembling uncontrollably.

To set up a formation, a formation master would have to do all kinds of calculations to align their formation with the geographical terrain so as to better bring out its might.

Even for 7-star formation masters, executing the Hundred Flags of Void Sealing was no easy feat. They would usually only use this technique to set up lower grade formations, such as grade-4 or grade-5... However, the young man before him was only at the Consonant Spirit realm, so setting up a grade-5 formation should already be an extremely difficult task for him. And yet, he was still able to use such a profound skill...

'Is this for real?

'Are my eyes playing tricks on me?'

Boom!

Amidst the shocked gazes of the crowd, the formation flags flew to their respective positions with the sharp whistle of the wind. Some of them fell in between the fighting master teachers and spirit beasts while some lodged themselves into the cliffs of the forge.

It should have been possible to activate the formation as soon as the formation flags fell in place, but after seeing that there was no response after some time, a master teacher suddenly thought of something, and his face distorted in horror.

"This is bad... The spiritual energy in this land is far too chaotic for the formation to tap into. Without external spiritual energy to support the formation, the formation cannot be activated..."

The reason he was able to set up a grade-5 primary formation despite having yet to reach Cosmos Bridge realm wasn't due to his superior talent but because those flags had been imbued with the zhenqi of his teacher.

The imbued zhenqi would help the formation flags gather sufficient spiritual energy to bring out the might of the grade-5 formation. However, this could only be done in an environment where the flow of spiritual energy was stable.

But... the huge battle in the gorge had resulted in a massive

turbulence in the spiritual energy in the surroundings. Even if the formation flags were put in position, Zhang shi would still be unable to tap into the zhenqi imbued in the formation flags to activate the formation!

Just as the group was at a complete loss before the dire situation, the anxious voice of the young man before boomed in their ears.

"Prepare yourselves! East, throw your spirit stones two steps to your left! West, throw your spirit stones four steps to the right..."

"Yes!"

They had no idea what the other party was up to, but they didn't have time to think so much about it anymore. The master teachers in the four teams, North, South, East, and West, gathered their zhenqi and tossed the spirit stones in their hands out.

Wu wu wu!

52 people threw out a total of 520 middle-tier spirit stones simultaneously into the battlefield.

Roar!

Upon seeing the huge rain of spirit stones, the spirit beasts were taken aback. Sensing danger, they pounced into the air and attacked the spirit stones.

Huala!

As if a storm, the powerful torrent of attacks swept the spirit stones away from their original trajectory.

"It's over..."

The group stared at the sight in trepidation.

Zhang shi had most probably calculated the trajectory of the spirit stones' descent accurately before issuing precise instructions. However, with the trajectories messed up by the attacks of the spirit stones, their plan was going to fail.

Wneg weng weng weng!

Just when they thought that this operation was a failure, the spirit stones which had their trajectories altered struck the ground beneath Zhang Xuan at the very same instant.

Boom!

As soon as they came contact with the ground, a powerful surge of spiritual energy suddenly burst into the surroundings, sweeping across the formation flags.

"This..."

"Zhang shi... actually predicted the attacks from the spirit beasts as well?"

Innumerable pupils dilated upon that sight.

The sight before them was within Zhang shi's calculations as well?

In other words, he knew that the spirit beasts would attack the spirit stones upon seeing them. Taking that into account, he made the precise calculations for the spirit stones to clash with one another beneath his feet before issuing specific instructions to each group as to how they should toss their spirit stones!

This...

The situation was so inconceivable that it felt like some supernatural power was at work.

Just as everyone's face was pale with shock, Zhang Xuan coldly bellowed, "Activate!", and with a furious stomp, a surge of zhenqi shot out.

Weng!

Taking in the concentrated spiritual energy in the air, the formation flags began to buzz, and a thick layer of mist cloaked the master teachers and spirit beasts in the gorge instantly.

Illusory Footsteps Beguilement Formation, activated!

"Through the burst of spiritual energy caused by the collision of spirit stones, order was re-established in the flow of spiritual energy in the surroundings for a brief instant, allowing the formation to be activated... How deep must one's understanding of formations be to do this? Even Grandmaster Tao Ran who created this Illusory Footsteps Beguilement Formation would surely be incapable of such a feat!"

The three master teachers from Luoyuan Empire were completely dumbstruck by the sight before them.

It had only been a few short breaths since Zhang shi had leaped down from the floating rock platform, but the heck had it been frightening!

One after another, the impossible had been realized easily by that young man's hand!

"With the activation of the formation, all of the spirit beasts and master teachers are trapped. As long as we move carefully now, we should be able to save all of the master teachers!"

Seeing the activation of the formation, Luo Xuan, Ruohuan gongzi, and the others heaved a sigh of relief.

With the Beguilement Formation veiling their sight and confounding their senses, it was impossible for the spirit beasts and master teachers to continue battling. At least, until the formation was inactivated, the master teachers were safe.

"Indeed! As expected of Zhang shi, to be able to think of and carry out such a plan..."

The crowd nodded.

Hong long!

Just as everyone had just heaved a sigh of relief, a deafening reverberation suddenly sounded in the formation, and the mist

billowed furiously.

"Sh*t... the spirit beasts are intending to... break the formation using brute force!" a Luoyuan Empire master teacher exclaimed.

Chapter 710 Barging into the Beguilement Formation

It was no easy feat for an amateur to break a formation, but with sufficient strength, it was still possible to do so through brute force!

If someone were to attempt to trap Zhang Xuan with a grade-3 formation now, even without using the Eye of Insight of Library of Heaven's Path, he would be able to crush the formation with just his fists.

No matter how powerful a formation might be, there would surely be a limit to its durability. If it were to suffer damage beyond its durability limit, it would instantaneously collapse.

Before supreme power, everything else was fleeting.

The Illusory Footsteps Beguilement Formation that the Luoyuan Empire master teacher had provided was a grade-5 primary formation. While it could trap Cosmos Bridge realm cultivators, it would be hard for it to do the same to stronger opponents.

The strongest of these spirit beasts were only at the Cosmos Bridge realm, but there were too many of them. Put their prowess together, and even a Transcendent Mortal 7-dan Perfect Harmonization realm expert would have to retreat in fear. With this force directed toward the formation, it was unlikely that the formation would be able to hold on for too long.

"Break the formation using brute force?"

Hearing those words, the faces of the crowd turned pale.

It was just a moment ago that they'd thought that they would be able to save everyone in the gorge, but in the next moment, the formation was already on the verge of breaking. What should they do now?

Were they to watch by from the sidelines as the formation was torn apart, and the master teachers were plunged into danger once more?

After everything they had done?

Luo Xuan turned to the master teacher from Luoyuan Empire and asked, "You possess the deepest understanding of this formation. Is there any way to salvage the situation?"

The gazes of the others also hurriedly shot over.

The formation flags and blueprint were provided by him, so perhaps he might have a way to sustain the formation.

"Salvage the situation?"

With a bitter smile, the Luoyuan Empire master teacher shook his head and said, "There is indeed a way, but it's impossible to succeed!"

"Impossible to succeed? What is it? With so many of us here, we might just be able to find a way to accomplish it," Luo Xuan urged.

They had 52 master teachers here, and a handful of them were formation masters as well. As long as the other party could point out a direction for them, they just might be able to accomplish it somehow.

"At this moment, our numbers don't mean anything!"

The Luoyuan Empire master teacher sighed. "The Illusory Steps Beguilement Formation is a grade-5 primary formation, but if reinforced by a 5-star formation master, it could display the strength of a grade-5 intermediate or even advanced formation! By then, it would be impossible for these spirit beasts to break out of the formation using brute force."

"5-star formation master? Zhang shi's understanding of formations should be on par with a 5-star formation master, wouldn't that work?" Ruohuan gongzi couldn't help but ask.

Since Zhang shi was able to set up even a grade-5 formation so easily, surely reinforcing a formation wouldn't pose any trouble at all.

"You don't understand what I am saying. By 5-star formation master, I am saying that the person's cultivation must reach Cosmos Bridge realm as well! Zhang shi's comprehension of formations is indeed formidable, but his cultivation is still limited at the Consonant Spirit realm. Without sufficient strength, he won't be able to bring out the true might of the power my teacher has imbued into the formation!" the Luoyuan Empire master teacher explained.

"This..."

Everyone clenched their fists tightly in frustration.

With their collective strength, they would have been able to help with anything else, but the Cosmos Bridge realm...

With the formation on the verge of collapsing, it was impossible for anyone to achieve a breakthrough within this short period of time.

In other words, it was impossible for them to reinforce the formation!

"That Brother Yu from before has reached the Cosmos Bridge realm, but it's too late to look for him now..."

Luo Xuan clenched his jaws in frustration.

Among the freshmen, the only one he knew to have reached Cosmos Bridge realm was the Brother Yu whom he had met just before the entrance examination. However, the other party was nowhere to be seen at the moment. Besides, considering the conflict between Zhang shi and him, it would be nigh impossible to gain his assistance!

After a moment of hesitation, one master teacher suggested, "Since it has come down to this, why don't we leave the gorge to

try and get the help of other examinees in the area? Otherwise, once the formation collapses and the spirit beasts break loose, we will all be doomed..."

However, halfway through his words, he suddenly noticed the bizarre silence amidst the group. Looking up, he saw each and every one of them staring at the battlefield below with a frenzied look on their faces.

"What happened?"

Frowning, he shifted his gaze downward, and his mouth slowly widened.

In the midst of the wavering formation, Zhang shi stood on a floating rock platform, and his aura was rising steadily.

Hong long long!

He furiously absorbed the surrounding spiritual energy through his acupoints, and the absurd speed of his absorption induced a deep rumbling reminiscent of thunder in the gorge. A magnificent bridge connecting him to the world could vaguely be seen behind him. At this moment, he looked exceptionally tall and powerful, as if an undefeatable god of war.

"This... He is trying to achieve a breakthrough to the Cosmos Bridge realm?"

The master teacher's lip quivered uncontrollably, and he nearly burst into tears.

To advance to the Cosmos Bridge realm, other Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle cultivators would have their teacher stand guard for them in case of any problems, and all kinds of resources would be prepared by their sides so as to prevent exhaustion whenever required. Even so, it would still take several days of hard work before they could achieve the breakthrough... And yet, this fellow actually made the breakthrough on the spot just because he required his cultivation to be at the Cosmos Bridge realm in order

to reinforce the formation...

What the heck was this!

Boom!

Amidst his shocked trembling, Zhang Xuan widened his mouth and swallowed the faint bridge in the air. His body rumbled, and his aura began to surge furiously.

Hu!

Exhaling a mouthful of turbid gas, the young man opened his eyes, and a bright gleam shone from his eyes. His movements were extremely graceful, seemingly aligned with nature itself.

"Cosmos Bridge realm... He really made the breakthrough just like that?"

"Isn't this a little... way too easy..."

Everyone swallowed a mouthful of saliva.

Never had they ever seen someone achieve a breakthrough so quickly in their life.

After two or three breaths, a Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle cultivator had become a Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator...

'Brother, are you sure you aren't an expert who came here just to toy with us?'

Oblivious to the frenzied crowd, Zhang Xuan glanced at the shaking formation beneath him and muttered, "There's no time for me to continue..."

Under normal circumstances, possessing the entire Cosmos Bridge realm Heaven's Path Divine Art, he would strive for Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle in a single breath. However, with the formation teetering on the brink of collapse, he couldn't afford to wait any longer.

"Stabilize!"

With a flick of his finger, a surge of zhenqi shot out from his hand. The surge of zhenqi further divided into several hundred streams, permeating throughout the entire formation.

Geji! Geji!

Under the nourishment of the Heaven's Path zhenqi, the thinning mist abruptly thickened once more. The Illusory Steps Beguilement Formation, which had been shaking violently under the rampage of the spirit beasts, gradually stabilized as well.

"He succeeded..."

"The formation has been reinforced..."

The excitement and agitation of the crowd were palpable. Admiration seeped into their gazes as they looked at the young man below.

To reach Cosmos Bridge realm on a whim... Was that young man still human?

This was especially so for Ruohuan gongzi, Luo Xuan, and the others. Swallowing a mouthful of saliva, they were on the verge of fainting from shock.

They had seen the other party making the breakthrough for Yin-Yang realm to Clarifying Turbidity realm during the Master Teacher Tournament in Myriad Kingdom City with their own eyes. Barely a month had passed, and he was already a Cosmos Bridge realm expert...

They were still thinking of competing with him after reaching the Master Teacher Academy, but they could no longer muster the confidence to do so.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan climbed back up and instructed, "Alright. Since the Beguilement Formation has stabilized, let's hurry up and save the master teachers inside!"

"You're right. However, given that spirit beasts are roaming

inside the formation as well... how can we ensure that we will be able to stay out of their path?" a master teacher within the crowd asked.

The activation of the Beguilement Formation had halted the battle momentarily and trapped the spirit beasts, thus providing an opportunity to save the master teachers. However... things weren't as simple as they seemed.

The spirit beasts weren't dead yet. It was still possible to encounter them in the Beguilement Formation, and the chances of that were indeed relatively high considering the number of spirit beasts trapped inside the formation.

Furthermore, the Beguilement Formation didn't discriminate against friend and foe. In other words, the master teachers inside were also affected by it.

Of course, the master teachers could try leaping up onto the floating platforms and attempt to escape from the Beguilement Formation. However, under the circumstances where even their sense of direction was confounded, it would be difficult for them to differentiate between up and down. On top of that, to truly escape from the formation, they would have to find the Life Gate first.

The Illusory Steps Beguilement Formation wouldn't be called a grade-5 formation if it were so easy to escape from.

In the end, the Beguilement Formation was just a means to buy some time for those inside.

Zhang Xuan glanced at the Beguilement Formation and replied, "I see. Wait here then, I'll head in to save them."

"Zhang shi, you mustn't! Even though you are a formation master, your senses will still be confounded in the Beguilement Formation. It'll be a disaster if you were to be trapped with the spirit beasts inside..."

Everyone was horrified by Zhang Xuan's words.

Even though Zhang Xuan had reached Cosmos Bridge realm, there were plenty of Cosmos Bridge realm spirit beasts inside the formation as well. There was no way he could stand against so many powerful spirit beasts!

"Trapped?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head before instructing, "There will be some injured among the master teachers inside, so prepare to receive and treat them!"

After which, leaving no time for the crowd to react, he leaped straight into the Beguilement Formation.

"Zhang shi..."

The crowd's vision darkened, and they nearly fainted on the spot.

To leap right into the Beguilement Formation, what if he leaped right into a swarm of spirit beasts? Even if he was tired of living, this wasn't the way to seek death!

A master teacher amid the crowd asked, "What do we do?"

"There's no need to panic. Zhang shi would never do anything reckless. Since he dared to leap into the formation, he must have his own plan!" Ruohuan gongzi assured.

Others might not know Zhang shi well, but he knew that the other party would never do anything he was unconfident of. Considering how the other party jumped in without any hesitation, he must have a plan in mind.

"Indeed. Didn't Zhang shi tell us to prepare to receive the casualties? Since he said those words, he must have found a way to save the master teachers inside!" Luo Xuan added.

"A plan in mind? What plan could he come up with? Even if he has a thorough understanding of formations, he still can't possibly stand against so many spirit beasts alone..."

"That is unless he finds a way to circumvent the spirit beasts to

save the others!"

"Since Zhang shi was able to set up a grade-5 formation and achieve a breakthrough to the Cosmos Bridge realm so easily, he might just really accomplish this impossible feat..."

After a momentary discussion, the crowd turned their gazes back to the battlefield. Zhang Xuan had already disappeared amidst the thick layer of mist.

It was impossible for him to fight against so many spirit beasts single-handedly. The only possible solution was for him to circumvent the spirit beasts and guide the master teachers out.

However... there were several hundred spirit beasts in the Beguilement Formation. Even if Zhang shi knew how to navigate around the formation, was it really possible to circumvent all of them?

Roar! Roar! Roar!

While everyone was tense, ferocious roars abruptly sounded from the midst. It seemed like Zhang Xuan had encountered with some of the spirit beasts.

"Did Zhang shi encounter the spirit beasts?"

If that was really it, he would be in grave danger!

"What do we do?"

Anxious, everyone was tempted to rush in to help him. However, before they could even move, another wave of roars sounded. However, it wasn't a ferocious roar this time. Rather, it seemed like the spirit beasts had encountered something sinister and terrifying.

It was tinged with fear and apprehension.

Roar? Roar? Roar?

Following which, screams of agony reverberated throughout the gorge, threatening to burst one's eardrum. Rather than Zhang shi,

it seemed like it was the spirit beasts who were in danger...

"What is going on?"

Everyone stared at one another bewilderedly.

Chapter 711 Tamed!

Within the mist, Zhang Xuan slowly advanced.

Before his Eye of Insight, a grade-5 Beguilement Formation meant nothing to him at all. The spirit beasts and master teachers in the formation might be unable to see him, but he could see every single movement they were making as clear as day.

With a swift motion, he silently snuck up to a spirit beast and struck it with his palm!

Putong!

The spirit beast immediately collapsed to the ground.

Having reached the Cosmos Bridge realm, his zhenqi strength had reached 5,500,000 ding, a might comparable to a Cosmos Bridge realm advanced stage expert. Even though the spirit beasts weren't weak, how could they stand against such powerful might?

(Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage 4,000,000 ding, intermediate stage 4,800,000 ding, advanced stage 5,600,000 ding, pinnacle 6,200,000 ding!)

The spirit beast tried to struggle to its feet in order to fight its assailant, but at that moment, a voice sounded by its ear.

"Submit or die!"

These words were spoken in the Ancient Beast Language.

Roar!

Given that the master teachers had come to the mountain to hunt them, it thought that the only option it had was to fight to its death. Thus, when Zhang Xuan presented an offer to the spirit beast, it hesitated. It could choose to fight its assailant to the death, but having experienced the immense might of the other party, it knew that its chances of victory were extremely slim. After a short moment of contemplation, it gritted its teeth and knelt down.

As soon as it submitted, it felt a warm surge of energy flowing into its body. In an instant, not only did it recover from its injuries, its bloodline also became purer under the nourishment of the energy.

"Roar?" The spirit beast's eyes reddened in agitation. It knew that this was a hard-to-come-by opportunity for it to raise its cultivation, so it immediately bowed earnestly to express its submission.

"Un."

Following which, Zhang Xuan instructed the spirit beast to stay put before advancing ahead.

Even though Elder Mo had said that these spirit beasts had hurt many innocent civilians, a life was still a life. If there was an option, he would rather tame them than kill them.

Of course, if the spirit beasts refused to submit, he wouldn't hesitate to kill them either. On a battlefield, showing mercy to one's enemy was foolish.

As he proceeded deeper into the mist, the screams of agony from the spirit beasts continued to echo ceaselessly in the gorge. As time passed, the number of tamed spirit beasts increased, and the casualties from the 'obstinate faction' piled up as well.

As Zhang Xuan headed from spirit beast to spirit beast in the formation, he also made use of this opportunity to absorb the spiritual energy in the air to advance and reinforce his cultivation.

A whirlpool of spiritual energy had formed in the Beguilement Formation due to the burst of spiritual energy from the 520 middle-tier spirit stones. Since he could save some spirit stones, it would be a waste if he didn't make full use of this opportunity.

Two hours later, he successfully reached Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle.

At the same time, he had also finished dealing with the several

hundred spirit beasts in the area. The only ones remaining in the area were those who chose to submit to him.

Having reached Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle, his strength had increased to 8,000,000 ding, a might comparable to Perfect Harmonization realm primary stage cultivators.

Taking into account the 4,000,000 ding from his physical body and 3,200,000 ding from his soul cultivation, he could match up to even a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan primary stage expert.

If he were to encounter that young man from the Yuan Clan once more, he would be able to defeat the latter easily even without using his clone.

"I am done dealing with the spirit beasts. It should be fine to deactivate the formation now!"

After scanning the area once more with his Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan verified that he had finished dealing with all of the spirit beasts. With a chuckle, he stomped his feet.

Hu!

The formation came to a halt, the thick mist in the gorge abruptly vanished, and the battlefield came into sight once more.

...

At the very center of the gorge, two hundred master teachers were sitting on the floor. Some were treating their own injuries while others were attempting to recover their zhenqi.

They had followed the spirit beasts in hope of hunting them down, but who knew that it was actually a scheme, and they would end up being the prey instead.

Nearly every single one of them had sustained significant injuries. If not for the Beguilement Formation the young man had set up, they might have all died by now.

A pale-faced master teacher who was still recuperating from his

injuries exclaimed, "I know that man, he is Zhang Xuan Zhang shi from Huanyu Empire! He possesses a half 9-dan Great Violetwing Beast. I had the honor of meeting him at the bazaar previously!"

Even though he had only caught a glimpse of Zhang Xuan amidst the crowd back in the bazaar, he was still able to recognize the latter.

This fellow had offered Transcendent Mortal 8-dan inner cores in exchange for Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation technique manuals, and this matter had caused a huge storm in the bazaar. There were none who were present in the bazaar then who would be unfamiliar with his name.

Just that, as only a small proportion of the thirty thousand freshmen had visited the bazaar, there were also many freshmen who were unaware of Zhang Xuan's identity.

"Half 9-dan tamed beast? Does that mean that there's hope for us?"

A master teacher clenched his fists expectantly.

"It's not that simple!"

Another slightly older master teacher shook his head. "There are around four hundred spirit beasts here, and nearly half of them have reached Cosmos Bridge realm. On top of that, due to the narrow space in the gorge, this place is highly disadvantageous to the Great Violetwing Beast, who specializes in speedy maneuvers. Even though the other party has set up a Beguilement Formation to rescue us, considering how it is unlikely that he will be able to maneuver through the formation himself, all it does is to delay the inevitable."

A single spirit beast might not pose much of a threat, but surely several hundreds of them together would.

If an army of soldiers were to strike simultaneously, even a top-notch expert could be destroyed. This was precisely how each royal

family was able to maintain firm control over their nation.

Such was the sight before them as well.

The fact that four hundred spirit beasts were lying in wait to ambush them here meant that they had already formed an alliance. In this narrow gorge, an aerial spirit beast would find it hard to avoid all of the attacks from the spirit beast alliance. It would just be a matter of time before it was worn down and defeated.

"Then... are we to just wait for death?"

The master teacher's complexion looked extremely awful.

"There's no point thinking about it. Let's just recuperate for the time being and face whatever comes our way. Our only hope is for Elder Mo to notice the dire situation we are in and come over to save us. There's nothing else we can do."

The older master teacher sighed deeply.

He was partially at fault for putting everyone into this crisis.

It was his greed that had led them into this trap.

"Wait, something is amiss. Ding shi, why do I hear screams of agony from the spirit beasts? Is it possible that Zhang shi is maneuvering around the formation to deal with them one by one?" another master teacher asked.

Quite a few desolate screams from the spirit beasts had sounded since the activation of the Beguilement Formation. Could someone be dealing with the spirit beasts?

"You are too naive!"

Ding shi shook his head. "The spirit beasts are clearly exploiting the lack of visibility to lure us in. Even if that isn't the case, the sound is likely just an effect of the Beguilement Formation!"

"Lure us in?"

"Un. As a 4-star beast tamer, I can discern the emotions behind the voices of spirit beasts. Even though their voices sound anguished, there is an excited undertone to it... Clearly, they think of us as fish in a net. They know that we are cornered, and they are waiting excitedly for the moment when the Beguilement Formation runs out of energy and collapses!" Ding shi said.

Even though he couldn't comprehend the Ancient Beast Language and couldn't comprehend the meaning behind the spirit beasts' words, that didn't hinder him from perceiving their emotions.

Their voices were intermixed with anguish and excitement. Perhaps, they might have found an idea to clear them in a single sweep.

"Alright, let's focus on recuperating so that we can pull as many of those bastards down to the grave with us..."

At this point, Ding shi was just about to advise the master teachers not to pin their hopes on the uncertain when the formation before them suddenly shook violently.

Grim expressions surfaced on the master teachers' faces in the area.

Ding shi got to his feet and yelled furiously, "The formation is going to collapse soon! Grab your weapons and prepare for battle..."

Weng!

But before he could finish his words, the thick mist concealing their sight vanished completely. Following which, they saw a young man slowly walking up to them.

Everyone was dumbfounded.

"Alright, you are saved!" the young man said calmly.

"Saved?"

Astounded by those words, everyone hurriedly turned to look at the surroundings, only to see the spirit beasts which had bared their fangs at them just a few hours ago kneeling on the floor respectfully.

And walking through the kneeling spirit beasts, the young man resembled an indomitable conqueror.

"This..."

"They are all... tamed?"

"Taming four hundred spirit beasts in just two hours?"

Soon, everyone realized what was going on. However, coming to understand the reality of the situation only deepened their shock.

Other beast tamers had to offer all kinds of artifacts and fawn on a spirit beast in order to persuade it to submit to them. Yet, just by setting up a Beguilement Formation, this young man had actually managed to tame so many spirit beasts within two hours...

Was this for real?

They weren't the only shocked ones. Upon seeing the formation disappear, Ruohuan gongzi and the others also thought that they would be in for a difficult battle. However, upon seeing this sight, they nearly fainted from astonishment.

How powerful must one be to tame four hundred spirit beasts in two hours...

'Brother, is there anything that can contain you in this universe?'

Amidst the shock, someone suddenly shouted, "Wait, something isn't quite right... Take a look at Zhang shi's cultivation!"

Hearing those words, everyone's gazes fell on Zhang Xuan.

That single glance made their bodies tremor uncontrollably, and they nearly fell from the stone platform.

It was just a moment ago that Zhang shi had just reached the

Cosmos Bridge realm. But currently, his strength felt perpetual, reminiscent of an unrelenting river. Somehow, it reminded them of the sight of myriad tributaries converging into an ocean.

"Convergence of Myriad Tributaries, this is a sign of one being on the verge of reaching Perfect Harmonization realm. He has reached Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle!"

"Didn't he just reach Cosmos Bridge realm a moment ago?"

Rubbing their eyes forcefully, everyone felt as though they were going mad.

They had all met top-notch geniuses who advanced swiftly in their cultivation, but never had they witnessed anything as stupefying as this.

Right after a breakthrough, he actually shot from primary stage to pinnacle in a single breath...

How the heck did he cultivate?

Even bamboo shoots didn't grow as quickly as him!

"Zhang shi must have used some kind of secret art to raise his cultivation so as to save them... Otherwise, how could he possibly tame so many spirit beasts within such a short period of time?"

"Indeed! There are four hundred spirit beasts here. Unless one wields overwhelming strength, how could one win the loyalty of all of them?"

The crowd clenched their fists tightly.

As master teachers, they knew how difficult cultivating was, so they immediately discounted the possibility that Zhang Xuan had achieved a breakthrough. Instead, they thought that he had paid a heavy price using some secret art to temporarily raise his cultivation.

Given that half of the spirit beasts present here possessed the strength of Cosmos Bridge realm, the only way to tame them

quickly was to overpower them.

His self-sacrificial spirit to save his fellow peers was indeed worthy of respect!

Amidst everyone's astonishment and admiration, Zhang Xuan suddenly announced, "The spirit beasts I have killed and tamed should provide sufficient points for all of you to clear the examination. There's no need for you to hunt spirit beasts anymore; you should report back to the starting line."

Following which, the young man leaped up the floating rock platforms.

"Sufficient points for us to clear the examination?"

"Zhang shi means that... he wants us to take these spirit beasts and inner cores back to clear the examination?"

"But these are the spirit beasts he tamed and killed personally! Is he giving them to us? This..."

Staring at the figure disappearing from the gorge, the crowd clenched their fists tightly, and their eyes reddened.

To selflessly act with the welfare of humanity in mind...

This was a true master teacher!

Chapter 712 Myriad Anthive Queen

After a moment of silence, Ding shi glanced at the master teachers in the surroundings and asked, "Even though Zhang shi cares not for these spirit beasts, can we really... shamelessly claim these spirit beasts for ourselves?"

As master teachers, they had their pride and moral compass.

"If not for Zhang shi, we might have died by now. If we were to claim his hard work for ourselves after all that, we would be worse than beasts!"

They already owed a debt of gratitude to Zhang shi for saving them. If they were to take the other party's items for themselves after all of that, how could they possibly face the other party in the future?

How could they face their own consciences?

Scanning the surroundings, Ding shi said, "Since everyone here shares the same thoughts, I have a suggestion!"

At this moment, Ruohuan gongzi, Luo Xuan, and others from Huanyu Empire's party had also scaled down the floating rock platforms and into the gorge.

"Ding shi, please speak!"

The crowd's gaze fell on him.

"Since Zhang shi told us to return, let's listen to his words. We'll take these spirit beasts to report back at the starting line. However..."

Ding shi suddenly paused.

"Each of us shall only claim a single point to clear the examination. We will place whatever is left under Zhang shi's name!"

"It is only right that we do that!"

"Indeed. These spirit beasts were tamed and killed by Zhang shi, of course we should put the points under his name!"

...

Hearing those words, the crowd immediately nodded in agreement.

Elder Mo had already said that the points were cumulative and transferable. Since these spirit beasts were tamed and killed by Zhang shi, they could just claim a single point to pass the examination while passing the remaining sum to Zhang shi.

Such respectable conduct should be made known to the teachers and elders of the academy!

This was what they should do, and this was what they believed in as well.

Having decided on the matter, the group quickly brought the spirit beasts and inner cores down the mountain.

...

Oblivious of their decision, Zhang Xuan leaped out of the gorge and flitted alongside the cliff, headed to the top of the mountain.

A conjecture of his had been confirmed while he was in the midst of taming the spirit beasts earlier on.

Previously, when he realized that the spirit beasts were luring master teachers into an ambush they prepared orderly, a doubt had emerged in his mind... How did these fellows uncover the tracks of the master teachers and avoid the traps they had laid for them?

After all, the spirit beasts that were in charge of luring the spirit beasts were only at Consonant Spirit realm. It was impossible for them to notice traps that even most master teachers had difficulty perceiving. Unless... someone had been guiding them from behind!

With this deduction in mind, Zhang shi interrogated the spirit

beasts he had tamed to gather news from them.

Under his questioning, he managed to uncover some significant information.

The reason they were able to precisely locate the master teachers and avoid their traps was indeed due to a spirit beast guiding them from the rear!

'Perfect Harmonization realm primary stage spirit beast... Myriad Anthive Queen!'

Through interrogating the spirit beasts, he had managed to uncover the mastermind behind the entire operation!

The Myriad Ant was an extremely rare savage beast. It was around the size of an ant, and it was able to fly freely in the mountains without being noticed.

These little things might mean nothing much to experts—they could easily crush one with their fingers—but what was truly fearsome was the being that stood behind them... Anthive Queen!

The Myriad Anthive Queen had a physique comparable to a human. While it was incapable of flight, it could control several ten thousand Myriad Ants simultaneously to scout an area.

The reason why those spirit beasts were able to notice the master teachers' ambushes in advance was due to the Anthive Queen scouting via the Myriad Ants and relaying the news.

As Zhang Xuan advanced in the direction pointed out to him by the spirit beasts, with a deep frown on his forehead, he muttered, "Why would the Myriad Anthive Queen help those spirit beasts?"

The Myriad Anthive Queen was a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast. On top of that, with so many Myriad Ants scouting in its stead, it could easily predict the movements of those that could pose a threat to it and take precautions in advance.

As such, it was extremely difficult for the examinees to harm it!

There was no reason for it to organize the other spirit beasts to deal with the humans!

After all, if Elder Mo were to find out that it was doing so, it would be difficult for it to preserve its life.

After some thought, Zhang Xuan was still unable to figure out the aims of the Myriad Anthive Queen. Thus, he shook this question out of his head.

'Its motive doesn't matter at all. What I am interested in is the Myriad Anthive Nest!'

Naturally, Zhang Xuan wasn't so magnanimous as to give the spirit beasts he had tamed and killed away to others. The only reason he did so was because he heard mention of the Myriad Anthive Queen, and there was an artifact that the latter possessed that he dearly wanted.

Myriad Anthive Nest!

It was through the Myriad Anthive Nest that the Myriad Anthive Queen was able to bring and summon Myriad Ants wherever it went!

The Myriad Anthive Nest was similar to a storage ring, but its interior was imbued with spiritual energy, allowing lifeforms to survive in it.

In other words, as long as there was sufficient space in the Myriad Anthive Nest, one could even put a human in it!

As a storage ring wasn't suited for storing living beings, it was extremely troublesome for Zhang Xuan to switch place with his clone. However, if he could obtain the Myriad Anthive Nest, he would be able to hide within it whenever he needed his clone to appear in public.

In fact, he could even store the Great Violetwing Beast inside. He would be able to catch his opponent off-guard by summoning it in the midst of a battle.

This was especially so given his identity as a beast tamer. He could store all of his tamed beasts inside the nest, and he would have a mobile army with him at all times!

As such, he immediately rushed over as soon as the situation at the gorge cleared up.

There was nothing more important than this at the moment. He was even willing to give the spirit beasts and tamed beasts to the master teachers just so that he could get to the Myriad Anthive Queen as soon as possible.

After all, the Anthive Queen should have known by now that he had saved the master teachers. If it were to escape or hide, it would be difficult to find it once more.

Through the Eye of Insight, he was able to see the usually indiscernible Myriad Ants clearly in the air. Flapping their wings furiously, they were all heading in a certain direction.

Concealing his aura, Zhang Xuan silently followed behind them.

Since these Myriad Ants had to report back to the Anthive Queen, he would surely be able to find the latter by following them.

Given his current cultivation, there was no difficulty in hiding his presence from the Myriad Ants, who were mere savage beasts.

Advancing ahead, he saw a few more groups of spirit beasts attempting to lure the examinees into a trap. However, seeing that the situation wasn't as dangerous as the previous encirclement, he chose not to interfere.

An hour later, he reached the middle mark of Leiyuan Peak.

At the current point, he was already several thousand meters above ground level, and the air was even colder than before. White clouds drifted in the surroundings, creating an illusion as if one were treading on clouds.

The further Zhang Xuan proceeded up the mountain, the fewer

examinees he saw. At this point, he barely saw anyone else anymore.

'Could the Anthive Queen be in the valley ahead?'

Watching as the Myriad Ants dive into a lush valley, Zhang Xuan chose to hide behind an enormous tree to assess the area inside before making a move.

The valley was huge, extending far into the horizon. Around three hundred meters away, there was a large cavern hidden beneath the shadows.

'To think that there would be some familiar faces here...'

Zhang Xuan chuckled.

There were two men standing at the entrance of the cavern, and surprisingly, Zhang Xuan was actually able to recognize them.

They were Senior Feng and Brother Yu, the man who made the bet with him earlier before the examination!

At this moment, the duo was standing outside the cavern with a burning incense stick in their hands.

The smoke of the incense slowly drifted into the interior of the cavern.

'Beastscale Incense? It's no wonder that fellow dared to make the bet with me. It seems like he does have a trump card to fall back on...'

Upon seeing the incense, Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

Unlike normal incense sticks, the surface of the Beastscale Incense was marked with grayish inscriptions, reminiscent of scales.

After lighting it with one's zhenqi, the smoke produced by the incense would drift in the direction determined by the will of the person who lit it.

This item was crafted using the scales of high-tier spirit beasts, and it carried a unique scent that possessed a deadly charm to weaker spirit beasts. If they were to inhale too much of it, it could even lull them to sleep.

Rumor had it that the method of producing Beastscale Incense had already been lost, so they were extremely rare and invaluable.

It was probably due to this artifact that Brother Yu dared to make the bet with him.

With this artifact in hand, he would be able to attract countless spirit beasts over to him easily.

It seemed like that fellow had slain quite a few spirit beasts and procured their inner cores already.

As for the reason why they were here, could it be that they had noticed the Myriad Anthive Queen and intended to kill it?

Standing in front of the cavern, Feng Wu asked in disbelief, "Brother Yu, is there really a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast inside?"

"Don't worry! I have made many preparations for this examination. Not only did I procure a Beastscale Incense, I even brought a few Seeking Mice here!" Brother Yu chuckled as a snow-white mouse jumped from his bosom.

The Seeking Mouse was a unique savage beast that possessed an exceptionally sensitive nose. Once it locked onto a scent, it would be able to find the source even when worlds apart.

Back then, when Lu Chong had been attacked by Lin Lang and hid in the royal palace's Book Collection Vault, this creature had been the one that betrayed his location.

"This... isn't an ordinary Seeking Mouse?"

Taking a glance, Senior Feng realized that there was a black streak trailing down from the Seeking Mouse's head to its tail, and

this had left him perplexed.

He had seen a Seeking Mouse in the past as well, but he recalled its fur to be completely white like snow. Why would it have a black streak trailing down from its head?

"Of course not. Considering how ordinary Seeking Mice are only savage beasts, how could they possibly accurately pinpoint the location of spirit beasts? This is a mutated breed, Golden Seeking Mouse, and it has long reached the level of a spirit beast. What is unique about it is that it has been fed with the feces of high-tier spirit beast from young. Once let loose, it is able to track down all spirit beasts in a radius of several dozen kilometers!"

Brother Yu stroked the Golden Seeking Mouse in his hand gleefully.

He had spent a hefty price to purchase this Golden Seeking Mouse just so as to achieve results so astounding that he could attract the eyes of the elders to him.

And from the looks of it... it seemed to be working as planned.

"This Golden Seeking Mouse is the one that told me that there is a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast inside..." Brother Yu chuckled.

"Considering that it is a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast, what should we do if the Beastscale Incense fails to work on it?"

Hearing the confirmation from the other party, Senior Feng still felt a little unnerved.

His cultivation realm was only at Half-Cosmos Bridge whereas Brother Yu's was at Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage. If the Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast managed to maintain its consciousness before the Beastscale Incense, their lives would be in danger.

"It is not like you are unaware of the properties of the Beastscale Incense. There's no spirit beast beneath Transcendent Mortal 8-

dan that can withstand its potency. Furthermore... even if it fails, I still have other aces up my sleeves. You need not worry!" Brother Yu declared confidently.

How could he possibly rush to this cavern knowing that there was a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast inside if he hadn't prepared anything else!

Other than the Beastscale Incense, he also had a grade-5 formation plate in his possession.

If that fellow really dared to come charging at them, that would be the last thing it ever did!

Chapter 713 Taming the Anthive Queen

'Even though the Beastscale Incense has the effect of inducing drowsiness in spirit beasts, it is unlikely to work on the Myriad Anthive Queen!'

Taking the scene before him into sight, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

The Beastscale Incense had a powerful trancing effect that would put even Transcendent Mortal 7-dan pinnacle spirit beasts to sleep with just a single whiff. However, it just so happened that the Myriad Anthive Queen was an exception.

A lifeform that could control thousands of Myriad Ants—how powerful must its soul be?

How could it be easy to make it faint?

If they were to continue down this path, they would be in trouble once the Myriad Anthive Queen emerged.

'I must get the Myriad Anthive Nest by all costs. It won't be easy for me to get the Anthive Nest once they realize that the spirit beast inside the cavern is the Anthive Queen...'

Zhang Xuan didn't worry about the safety of the duo. After all, how could one who could acquire even the invaluable Beastscale Incense not possibly have even more formidable life preservation means?

What he was more concerned with at the moment was how he should keep the others from realizing what was inside!

The Anthive Queen was an incomparably rare spirit beast. Even if one were to comb through the entire Hongyuan Empire, they might not be able to find a second one. To actually stumble upon one here already took a huge stroke of luck. If it were to land in the other party's hands, it would be impossible for him to get it back anymore.

After all, who would be willing to give up an artifact capable of storing an army?

'Should I knock them out?'

Zhang Xuan stroked his lower jaw as he contemplated what he should do.

The easiest way to obtain the Myriad Anthive Nest was for him to rush in. However, the duo was blocking the entrance to the cavern. To get past them, he would have to knock them out.

'But if Elder Mo found out and judged it as a violation of the rules, I might be deemed to have failed the examination. That would be a huge loss...'

As soon as such the thought came into his mind, Zhang Xuan quickly shook his head.

He had little understanding of the capability of a Saint, so he couldn't tell whether Elder Mo had some way of enforcing the rules. Since the latter had spoken against harming other candidates to compete for their prey, if he were to be caught knocking the other party out and taking the Myriad Anthive Queen, he could land himself in serious trouble.

"Clone!"

Thus, Zhang Xuan chose to summon his clone.

Communicating telepathically with the other party, Zhang Xuan executed the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps while hiding himself amidst the lush tree crowns as he moved closer to the cavern.

If he had used some movement technique instead, it was unavoidable that he would produce some noise. Such a problem wouldn't occur when he was in flight.

As long as he didn't wish to be found, the other party wouldn't be able to notice him easily even if they had reached Perfect

Harmonization realm.

Soon, Zhang Xuan arrived at a location just several dozen meters away from the cavern, and he hid himself within the shrubs.

...

"It has been some time since we lit the Beastscale Incense; the spirit beast inside should be asleep by now. Should we go in to take a look?"

After multiple reassurances from Brother Yu, Senior Feng was finally able to put aside his worries. With nothing weighing on his mind, he couldn't help but flush in agitation at the thought of procuring a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast inner core.

Elder Mo had said earlier that Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle spirit beast inner core was worth 1 point, a Consonant Spirit realm primary stage spirit beast was worth 10 points with an increment of 10 points for each small cultivation realm higher, and a Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage spirit beast was worth 100 points with an increment of 100 points for each small cultivation realm higher... so on and so forth. Going by this calculation, a Perfect Harmonization realm primary stage spirit beast inner core was worth 1000 points!

This was equivalent to killing ten Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage spirit beasts! With such a score, he would be able to earn a good placing despite the strong competition from the other examinees.

"There's no rush. A Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast possesses an exceptionally powerful soul. We should wait a little longer. It would be foolish to get careless now!" Brother Yu said.

He was also excited by the situation before him, but he wasn't about to allow his anxiousness to get in the way of his success.

As confident as he was in the Beastscale Incense, he still felt that he should be careful considering that it was a Perfect

Harmonization realm spirit beast he was dealing with.

"Alright!"

Senior Feng nodded with glowing eyes. "If we can hunt down this one, Brother Yu's points will near 2000. By then, Zhang Xuan will surely be unable to catch up with you even with the help from his half 9-dan spirit beast!"

Recalling the matters that had happened between him and Zhang Xuan, he couldn't help but feel slightly stifled.

Defeated by a single finger of the other party, he was utterly humiliated to the point that his confidence was shattered. If Brother Yu could defeat the other party in his stead, he might just be able to reassemble the vestiges of his confidence.

"No matter how powerful his tamed beast may be, he has to be able to find spirit beasts to hunt first. If he can't even find the spirit beasts, how can he obtain any points?"

Brother Yu sneered coldly as confidence beamed on his face.

So what if Zhang Xuan had a half 9-dan spirit beast?

Given the other party's capability, he would only be able to find and hunt down a single Cosmos Bridge spirit beast. On the other hand, he was going to hunt down a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast!

The other party's defeat was already inevitable!

"Indeed..." Senior Feng nodded in agreement. But at that moment, a strong wind suddenly sounded beyond the valley.

"Someone is here!"

Brother Yu's face darkened.

Senior Feng also hurriedly turned his sights over.

It wasn't easy for them to find such a formidable spirit beast. Sharing it with another was the last thing on their mind.

Just as Brother Yu and Senior Feng tensed up warily, the sound of the wind suddenly stopped. Following which, a deep voice echoed.

"Those are the marks of a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast!"

"Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast?"

Hearing those words, Brother Yu and Senior Feng's eyebrows leaped in shock.

To be found with such convenient timing, it couldn't be that the other party had followed them here to steal their prey from them, could it?

Hu hu!

However, it seemed like they were overthinking it. A strong gust of wind suddenly blew in the surroundings once more, but it gradually grew softer and softer. It seemed like the master teacher had gone off in another direction to pursue the Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast he had just spoken of.

"Take care of the Beastscale Incense, I'll go take a look!" instructed Brother Yu before heading out of the valley, unable to hold back his curiosity.

Could there really be another Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast here? Surely things couldn't be so coincidental?

Thus, he dashed out of the forest, only to see a figure rushing up the mountain. However, the figure was already extremely far away, making it hard to identify him clearly.

As for the marks of a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast, he combed through the area several times but there was nothing at all.

'Now!'

At this moment, Senior Feng's curious gaze was also directed in

the direction where Brother Yu left. The hidden Zhang Xuan chuckled softly, and 'hu!', he dived discreetly into the cavern without alarming anyone.

The one who exclaimed and fled earlier was Zhang Xuan's clone.

Naturally, his goal was to serve as a distraction so that Zhang Xuan could find an opportunity to slip in.

Of course, he had his clone mask his voice and warp his appearance so that it was impossible for the matter to be traced back to him.

Hu!

After slipping into the cavern safely, Zhang Xuan immediately activated his Eye of Insight and scanned the surroundings.

The interiors of the cavern were dark, cold, and damp. A layer of Myriad Ants lay unconscious on the ground, passed out under the potent effects of the Beastscale Incense.

Since the Beastscale Incense could knock out even a normal Transcendent Mortal 7-dan spirit beast, how could mere savage beasts possibly remain conscious before it?

Zhang Xuan slowly ventured deeper into the cavern. A moment later, his eyes lit up.

Not too far away, there was a hive around the size of a football hanging from the ceiling. However, it felt warm and smooth as if it was forged out of jade. With just a single glance, it was apparent that it was an extraordinary artifact.

Beside the hive was a spirit beast with snow-white fur. With a plump physique, it was around the size of a human. From afar, it resembled a snowman.

'This is the Myriad Anthive Queen?'

Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

He'd only learnt about the Myriad Anthive Queen from a brief

introduction in a book. There wasn't much of a description on its appearance, so Zhang Xuan had assumed that it would look as hideous as the Myriad Ants. Who knew that it would have such an adorable appearance instead?

Hu hu hu!

Deep in thought, Zhang Xuan failed to control his zhenqi for an instant. The next instant, the snowy white Myriad Anthive Queen's eyes suddenly locked onto him.

Sou!

It abruptly pounced over, and its claws tore down upon Zhang Xuan.

As expected of a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast, it possessed astonishing offensive power. Before the claw had even reached him, Zhang Xuan could already feel an immense pressure pushing down on him, threatening to tear him and the space around him to shreds.

Perfect Harmonization reflected the eventual convergence of all paths of a cultivator. With this convergence, one's zhenqi would become denser, purer, and more aligned with nature, allowing one to harness greater strength. At the same time, such a convergence also nourished one's soul.

A simple claw it might be, but it was derived from a harmony of the body, mind, and spirit. Unimaginable might was harnessed behind that simple claw.

"Humph!"

Knowing that it was too late to hide, Zhang Xuan gathered his might and countered with a fist.

His zhenqi raged furiously in his body. The might of his Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation, along with the enhancement from his physical body and soul, granted him strength comparable to a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan.

Kacha!

The fist and claw collided, and before the Myriad Anthive Queen could even process what was going on, its snowy body was suddenly sent spinning through midair. It crashed into a wall, leaving a huge dent in it.

It was simply too weak to stand against Zhang Xuan in a clash of strength.

If not for the resilient constitution that spirit beasts possessed, it might have died from that fist.

Weng!

After being sent flying in the first encounter, the Myriad Anthive Queen was forced to acknowledge the prowess of the man before it. Realizing the danger it was in, it hurriedly got onto its feet and dashed forward, intending to grab its hive before escaping.

"You want to escape?"

Knowing that it would be difficult for him to capture it once it escaped, Zhang Xuan stepped against the ground and executed the Heaven's Path Movement Art. Hu! In the blink of an eye, he suddenly appeared in between the Myriad Anthive Nest and the Myriad Anthive Queen.

With a surge of zhenqi, he sealed the air around the Myriad Anthive Queen, locking its movements.

Given Zhang Xuan's current strength, it would be difficult for a Perfect Harmonization realm expert to break through his seal.

"Weng! Weng!"

Seeing the human before it preventing it from getting its nest, the Myriad Anthive Queen panicked. Anxious, it bared its fangs, revealing two rows of sharp teeth.

'I must deal with it quickly...'

Zhang Xuan knew that he couldn't waste too much time on the

Myriad Anthive Queen, especially since he had no way of telling when Senior Feng and Brother Yu would come into the cavern. Furthermore, there were countless Myriad Ants sprawled all over the area. With their numbers, they would be a difficult foe to deal with once the effect of the Beastscale Incense wore off.

Thus, without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan gathered his strength and stepped forward. His palm whipped forward swiftly, striking the furry head of the Myriad Anthive Queen.

Peng!

Under that powerful palm strike, the Myriad Anthive Queen was sent crashing back into the wall once more. Large mouthfuls of blood spilled from its mouth.

This time, Zhang Xuan had utilized a significant portion of his strength. Even despite the resilient defenses of a spirit beast, the Myriad Anthive Queen still suffered severe injuries.

Placing his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan gazed down on the grievously wounded Myriad Anthive Queen impassively. His throat vibrated slightly as he spoke in the Ancient Beast Language.

"Submit to me and become my tamed beast, and I can heal you and raise your cultivation. Otherwise... be prepared to die!"

After which, he flicked a surge of the incredibly pure Heaven's Path zhenqi into the other party's body.

As if a refreshing stream of water was cleansing its body, the Myriad Anthive Queen felt its pores opening up in relaxation.

Weng! Weng! Weng!

After witnessing the incredible purity of the surge of zhenqi and its rapid recovery, the Myriad Anthive Queen realized that its life was no longer in its control, and hesitance would only lead to its demise. Thus, it lowered its head in submission.

"Yes. Let's form the contract!"

Knowing that the other party had chosen to submit after realizing that it was in a position of weakness, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

With the prowess of the Heaven's Path zhenqi and Ancient Beast Language, taming spirit beasts had become easier than ever for him. There was no need for excessive words.

"This..."

Soon, after the contract was completed, Zhang Xuan exhaled a mouthful of turbid breath. Following which, he glanced at the hive before him with a peculiar expression.

Chapter 714 Byzantium Helios Beast

After forming a contract with the Myriad Anthive Queen, a mental connection was forged between both of their souls. Through this connection, Zhang Xuan gained a level of understanding toward the Anthive Nest.

Immersing his consciousness into the Anthive Nest to take a look, Zhang Xuan's eyes began twitching uncontrollably.

This football-size hive was indeed capable of housing lifeforms, however... the diameter of the area inside was only around two meters. At the very most, it could only store his body and the Anthive Queen simultaneously, nothing more than that.

Zhang Xuan's initial thought had been to store the Great Violetwing Beast inside as well and form a huge spirit beast army who would follow him wherever he went. However, from the way things currently looked... it seemed like this was destined to remain as nothing more than a dream!

'There are varying tiers to the Myriad Anthive Queens. The one which I have tamed is the weakest of the lot, so the hive it built is slightly on the weaker end as well. Unless I induce a Bloodline Evolution in it and raise its cultivation, its hive will only remain the same size forever...'

Soon, Zhang Xuan understood the reason behind this matter.

The Myriad Anthive Queen he'd tamed was the weakest among its peers. Due to the limit of its strength, the hive that it had built could only house itself. If Zhang Xuan wanted a larger nest, he would have to find a way to raise the Myriad Anthive Queen's cultivation.

It was no wonder the Myriad Anthive Queen was able to remain safe on this mountain! In the eyes of a true expert, the functionality of such a hive was severely limited, and thus was not

worth the effort!

'What the heck is this...'

Zhang Xuan had thought that he'd stumbled on a gold mountain, but to think it would be rocks that were lying beneath the golden exterior. He could only smile bitterly to himself.

"There are disturbances in the spiritual energy inside. Let's hurry in to take a look..."

At that moment, a voice sounded outside the cavern. Following which, anxious footsteps could be heard. It seemed like Brother Yu and Senior Feng had noticed that something was amiss, and they were on their way in!

Battling against the Transcendent Mortal 7-dan Myriad Anthive Queen, there was no way that Zhang Xuan could conceal his aura. Considering the disturbance of spiritual energy in the surroundings and the loud crashing noise from the spirit beast crashing into the wall, how could they not have realized that something was amiss?

"Let's take a look first!"

A deep frown emerged on Zhang Xuan's face.

He immediately had the Myriad Anthive Queen enter the Anthive Nest before placing the Anthive Nest into the storage ring.

Even though the Anthive Nest was a spatial artifact, it possessed certain unique properties that allowed it to be stored within a storage ring.

Otherwise, if Zhang Xuan were to be carrying a football-sized object everywhere he went, even the most foolish of people would know that there was something wrong with it.

Hu!

After all was done, just as Zhang Xuan was about to leave, the footsteps seemed to have arrived at the entrance of the cavern.

Following which, a Night Illumination Pearl was suddenly tossed in, lighting up the surroundings.

'This is bad!'

Not expecting the other party to have reached him so quickly, Zhang Xuan swiftly flicked his fingers.

Peng!

The Night Illumination Pearl which had just been tossed in immediately exploded, and the light was swiftly swallowed by darkness. Knowing that there was no time to be lost, Zhang Xuan stepped forcefully against the ground.

Peng!

Executing the Heaven's Path Movement Art, Zhang Xuan's figure suddenly vanished. Before Brother Yu and Senior Feng could process what was going on, a swift blur flashed across their eyes.

"Someone is here..."

Astonished, the duo hurriedly put up their guards. However, the other party didn't seem to have any intention of fighting them. In the blink of an eye, the other party had already disappeared from view.

"Who was it..."

Brother Yu hurriedly gave chase. However, when he dashed out of the forest in the valley, there was no one in sight at all.

"The spirit beast... is missing?"

After which, he returned to the cavern to comb the area. However, there was no spirit beast in sight either. Brother Yu and Senior Feng traded glances with one another. They would have to be a fool if they still couldn't understand what was going on!

"Damn it... To think that the spirit beast which I knocked out with great difficulty was stolen! Who in the world is that b*stard?" Brother Yu bellowed furiously.

From his point of view, he had already crippled the spirit beast through his Beastscale Incense, but a b*stard had sneaked in to kill and loot his prey.

Otherwise, how could there be signs of battle but not a single Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast in sight?

To think that the spirit beast he'd spent so much Beastscale Incense on would end up as a gift for another. It was fortunate that he didn't explode on the spot.

...

Outside the valley, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

'That was a close call...'

It was fortunate that he had slipped out in time, or else his reputation could have been tarnished if the other party had insisted that he'd stolen his possession.

It was fortunate he'd moved swiftly to destroy the Night Illumination Pearl, thus turning the cavern completely dark. Otherwise, given the eye of discernment of the duo, they would have surely been able to recognize him.

After ensuring that he was a safe distance away and that there was no one around, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and released the Anthive Queen.

There were still some doubts that he had to clarify with it.

"Why did you offer your services to the spirit beasts to deal with the master teachers?"

Based on Zhang Xuan's understanding, the Myriad Anthive Queen was a callous being. Furthermore, it had no ties with the spirit beasts here, so why would it help them deal with the freshmen?

Wasn't this just bringing itself unnecessary trouble?

"It's... the Byzantium Helios Beast who forced me to do so!" the

Anthive Queen replied.

"Byzantium Helios Beast?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Having collected and assimilated in countless books from the Beast Halls that he had visited, he had gained knowledge of most savage beasts and spirit beasts in the world. However, never had he heard of the Byzantium Helios Beast.

What in the world was that?

"That's right! The Byzantium Helios Beast came by a few days ago, and he commanded me to offer help to the spirit beasts. On top of that, he even gathered all of the spirit beasts together and rallied them to unite against the humans..."

The Anthive Queen revealed the truth of the incident.

"You are saying that a Byzantium Helios Beast organized all of the spirit beasts across the entire Leiyuan Peak a few days ago so as to deal with the freshmen during the entrance examination?" Zhang Xuan asked with a grim expression.

If the Byzantium Helios Beast truly intended to protect these spirit beasts, it could have commanded them to leave instead, especially considering that the warning came several days ago. The time interval was more than sufficient for them escape to a safe distance away!

Yet, it chose to rally the spirit beasts against the humans...

Could it be that the Byzantium Helios Beast... intended to deal with the budding stars of the Master Teacher Pavilion here?

With a grave expression on his face, Zhang Xuan asked, "How strong is the Byzantium Helios Beast?"

"I have no idea; I am unable to gauge the depths of its strength. The only thing I know is that I am no match for him at all..." The Anthive Queen shook its head. "Right, the Byzantium Helios Beast is currently at the very top of Leiyuan Peak. It is still personally

overlooking the entire situation and issuing commands!"

"At the top of Leiyuan Peak?"

Zhang Xuan was bewildered. What was the background of the Byzantium Helios Beast? Why would he rally the spirit beasts to fight against humans?

"Yes!" The Anthive Queen nodded.

After asking a few more questions, Zhang Xuan managed to get a clearer glimpse of the picture. However, this only served to deepen his doubts.

The spirit beasts across Leiyuan Peak were indeed captured and released here by Elder Mo. However, a few days ago, the Byzantium Helios Beast appeared from nowhere and rallied the spirit beasts to cooperate with one another to deal with the humans.

So as to not become the sacrificial tool for the humans, those spirit beasts immediately agreed to cooperate with it.

Due to the unique capabilities of the Myriad Anthive Queen, it was given the role of gathering intelligence. On the other hand, the Byzantium Helios Beast was serving as the commander of the entire operation, issuing instructions to the spirit beasts to gather and encircle the master teachers so as to destroy them.

Returning the Anthive Queen to the hive, Zhang Xuan stroked his lower jaw and fell into deep thought.

'If we allow the Byzantium Helios Beast to continue issuing instructions to the spirit beasts, many examinees will surely be killed...'

Everyone participated in this entrance examination understanding that there was a clear risk of death, but there was a huge difference if someone was pulling the strings from behind the scenes to deal with the master teachers.

While it was a huge pity to see so many genius master teachers fall here, what Zhang Xuan was even more furious about was being played for a fool by a spirit beast.

"Allow me to see what kind of incredible being the Byzantium Helios Beast is!"

For a mere spirit beast to disregard Elder Mo and the Master Teacher Academy and tamper with the entrance examinations, intending to do the examinees harm, Zhang Xuan was interested to see what kind of incredible existence the other party would be.

Thus, turning his gaze toward the peak, Zhang Xuan began making his way up.

Leiyuan Peak was over 10,000 meters tall. The area beyond the halfway mark was cloaked with a deep layer of snow, and the terrain was treacherously steep. Without half a day of arduous effort, it should have been impossible for anyone to reach the peak.

However, through the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, it took Zhang Xuan a mere ten minutes of flight to reach his destination.

The area at the top of the peak was rather vast, spanning several li. A white layer of snow cloaked the bare peak, creating a natural mirror which threatened to sear one's eyes through the reflected sun rays.

With Zhang Xuan's cultivation, he couldn't possibly be harmed by mere sun rays. Nevertheless, the endless white snow in sight was extremely taxing on the eyes. Thus, Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight and began scanning the area.

Without understanding the true strength of the Byzantium Helios Beast, Zhang Xuan knew better than to act recklessly. Thus, he switched to a set of white clothes to blend in with his surroundings before slowly advancing while keeping his body close to the ground.

'There are spirit beast footprints ahead!'

After a moment of flight, Zhang Xuan soon noticed a set of massive footprints heading in a specific direction.

These footprints were roughly half a meter large, and they were deeply depressed in the thick layer of snow. This indicated that the owner of the footprints possessed an exceptionally large and heavy body.

'What spirit beast is this?'

Zhang Xuan frowned, perplexed.

These footprints were somewhat similar to a human, but there were some differing features, the main one being the size. Having read many books regarding beast taming, Zhang Xuan was confident in his knowledge regarding savage beasts and spirit beasts. Even rare beings like the Myriad Anthive Queen weren't beyond him. Yet, the footprints before him felt extremely foreign.

'Nevertheless, through the footprints, I will be able to track it down. My answer will lie at the end of this trail...'

Knowing that the mystery would be resolved at the end of the trail of footprints, Zhang Xuan hurried forward.

After a moment of flight, a massive straw cottage came into view. The footsteps disappeared at the doorstep of the straw cottage.

'A straw cottage? Could it be that... someone is living here?'

Spirit beasts usually resided in caves and such. Since there was a straw cottage here, did it mean that this was the residence of a human? And for the massive footprints which led to the straw cottage, did it mean that the spirit beast was actually a tamed beast of this human?

If that was the case, what motives did that human have?

'Or perhaps... could it be an Otherworldly Demon? This would explain the motive behind rallying the spirit beasts against the master teachers,' Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

If one had to name a race which bore deep hostility toward the master teachers, the Otherworldly Demons were surely the first to come to mind. Considering how the Byzantium Helios Beast had commanded the spirit beasts to deal with the master teachers, there was indeed a real possibility that Otherworldly Demons were pulling the strings!

Otherwise, why would anyone build a straw cottage on the top of this desolate snow mountain and live here?

At this moment, all of the pieces of the puzzle seemed to snap together.

'I should take a look first...'

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan slowly approached while holding his breath so as to prevent his aura from leaking out.

As expected, he soon noticed a massive spirit beast lying within the straw cottage through the opened doors. Its massive eyes were lightly shut, making it difficult to tell whether it was awake or asleep.

'Is this the Byzantium Helios Beast that the Myriad Anthive Queen spoke about? There's no spirit beast in mind that matches its description...'

The massive spirit beast in front of him was covered in a slightly grayish fur, reminiscent of a massive ape. It was a species which Zhang Xuan had never heard of, and this made him frown in frustration.

If it was a species unknown to him, there would be no record of the other party's strength, personality, and ability either.

A foreign spirit beast whose cultivation exceeded Transcendent Mortal 7-dan. Even for Zhang Xuan, this was a fearsome power to reckon with.

Hu hu hu!

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to approach to scout the situation, the sound of wind suddenly echoed from afar. An aerial spirit beast slowly flew over from the distance.

This fellow carried an astonishing aura that exerted an immense pressure even from a distance away.

A Transcendent Mortal 7-dan spirit beast.

"It must be in cahoots with the Byzantium Helios Beast!"

Seeing how that huge fellow rushed in without concealing its aura, and how the Byzantium Helios Beat didn't seem to pay the matter any heed either, Zhang Xuan could tell that the two were well-acquainted with one another. Thus, he slowly lowered himself to the ground and hid amidst the snow.

His movements were extremely light, and his clothes camouflaged with the surroundings as well. Even with the aerial view of that flying Transcendent Mortal 7-dan spirit beast, it still failed to notice him.

Chapter 715 Poor Brother Yu

Hu!

The Transcendent Mortal 7-dan aerial spirit beast landed right before the straw cottage. As it withdrew its wings, the massive gale from its movements lifted a cloud of snow from the ground.

Roar!

After descending to the ground, the aerial spirit beast howled.

Had any other beast tamer been here in Zhang Xuan's place, he would surely have been at a loss as to what was happening. However, fluent in the Ancient Beast Language, Zhang Xuan was able to comprehend the intent he was conveying through the roar.

"Lord, I have carried out your instructions and trapped those master teachers! There are at least three hundred to a thousand of them encircled at the moment, and most of them are injured!" the aerial spirit beast said.

Upon reaching the Transcendent Mortal realm, spirit beasts would acquire intelligence that was on par with humans. Even though they were still incapable of complex arts such as the setting up of formations and forging of weapons, they were already capable of analyzing the situation as a whole and carrying out orders.

Take Zhang Xuan's tamed beast for example, the Great Violetwing Beast. To exact vengeance for the Draconic Granite Beast, it had wreaked havoc upon the Huanyu Empire Beast Hall multiple times. However, while it was doing so, it would assess the situation before striking. For example, there was a period of time when a 6-star beast tamer was brought in to deal with it, but it wisely chose to steer clear during that period of time, leaving the Beast Hall completely helpless before it.

'As expected, they are intending to deal with the master teachers

on the mountain!'

Hearing the words from the aerial spirit beast, Zhang Xuan's expression turned livid.

Considering how this spirit beast had reached Transcendent Mortal 7-dan and was capable of flight, there were nearly no master teachers on the mountain who possessed the means to rival it on the peak!

Eight out of ten of the examinees were still at the Clarifying Turbidity realm while the rest were mainly at the Consonant Spirit realm. Even though a very small handful such as Brother Yu had reached Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage, they were still far from matching up to this Transcendent Mortal 7-dan spirit beast!

Not to mention, it was ruling over countless savage spirit beasts at that!

Judging from the aerial spirit beast's report, it seemed the master teachers Zhang Xuan had saved were only a portion of the victims in this scheme.

Considering how these two fellows had actually dared to lay their hands on the freshmen of the Master Teacher Academy, there was an extremely good chance that they had a close relationship with the Otherworldly Demons. Even if that wasn't the case, it was clear that they were hostile toward humans.

"Well done!"

The Byzantium Helios Beast climbed to its feet, and it slowly walked out of the straw cottage.

Its movements were slow and casual, but it was brimming with power. Zhang Xuan felt as if he were staring into an abyss, leaving him incapable of determining the depths of the other party's cultivation.

'Eye of Insight!'

Several lines rippled in Zhang Xuan's eyes as he tried to peer into the other party's cultivation. But to his shock, he realized that even the Eye of Insight was incapable of seeing through the other party.

'Could this mean that... the Byzantium Helios Beast has reached Transcendent Mortal 9-dan... or even beyond that?'

While Zhang Xuan's current cultivation was only at Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle, his fighting prowess was already on par with a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan primary stage cultivator. As such, his Eye of Insight was capable of seeing through the might of a weaker Transcendent Mortal 9-dan spirit beast.

Yet, he was unable to see through the mountain-like fellow before him. Did this mean that the other party had reached a deep mastery in Transcendent Mortal 9-dan? Or perhaps... had the other party surpassed the limits of a Transcendent Mortal already?

Beyond the 9-dans of Transcendent Mortal lay Half-Saint!

A spirit beast of this level was known as a saint beast.

If that was the case, this would explain why Zhang Xuan had never heard of the Byzantium Helios Beast. Given the Huanyu Empire Beast Hall's tier, there was no one who was sufficiently powerful to record books regarding saint beasts.

Overwhelmed with astonishment, Zhang Xuan accidentally caused a slight disturbance in the surrounding spiritual energy. This action immediately attracted the Byzantium Helios Beast's attention, and it turned its head over.

Startled, Zhang Xuan hurriedly retracted his gaze and focused his efforts on concealing his presence.

With Zhang Xuan's current ability, even dealing with a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan spirit beast would pose a huge threat, needless to say a Half-Saint beast!

With the incredible pure Heaven's Path zhenqi and his refined control over his physical body, Zhang Xuan was able to conceal his

presence thoroughly. Even a Saint would find it hard to notice him.

After glancing over momentarily, the Byzantium Helios Beast didn't seem to notice anything of interest, so it chose to turn its attention back to the aerial spirit beast.

"Has any master teachers noticed yet?" the Byzantium Helios Beast asked.

"Not yet. However, the two hundred master teachers trapped at Heaven's Thread have been saved by someone, and..."

At this point, the aerial spirit beast suddenly stopped. Its face was marked with hesitance, and it seemed as if he could hardly believe what he was about to say as well.

"And what?"

The Byzantium Helios Beast gazed deeply at the aerial spirit beast, and in that instant, it felt as if the sky was pressing down on them.

'Saint beast!'

Zhang Xuan's eyebrows leaped in shock.

Even though his gaze was no longer on the duo for fear of being noticed, he was familiar with this immense pressure. It was something he had felt from Elder Mo before the commencement of the entrance examination!

In other words, the other party wasn't a Half-Saint or a Nascent Saint but a true Saint!

To think that it was a Saint who had plotted the scheme against the examinees...

Cold sweat immediately trickled down Zhang Xuan's back!

Even if all of the examinees were to gather at this spot, they would still be no match for the other party! This was the immense might that a true Saint possessed!

"Furthermore, all of the spirit beasts assigned to Heaven's Thread have terminated communications with me. It seems that... they have betrayed us!" the aerial spirit beast reported.

"They have terminated communications? To dare betray me, they sure are brazen..."

The Byzantium Helios Beast narrowed its eyes. "Who are they? I'll teach them a lesson after this matter comes to an end!"

"It's the Bluebacked Ferocious Bear, Steelfang Panther, Southern Yellow Tiger, Metal-arm Ape... These, and the Anthive Myriad Queen as well!" the aerial spirit beast said.

After hearing that even the Myriad Anthive Queen had terminated communications as well, the Byzantium Helios Beast asked seriously, "The Myriad Anthive Queen as well? Have you looked into the matter yet?"

The Myriad Anthive Queen was the source of its information. Even with the prowess of a Saint, the Byzantium Helios Beast was still unable to extend its radar across the entire Leiyuan Peak to keep track of the movements of the master teachers.

"I suspect that it has been killed!" the aerial spirit beast replied. "After losing communications with the Anthive Queen, I flew to its nest and saw two master teachers snooping suspiciously around the area with a Beastscale Incense in hand..."

"Beastscale Incense? That artifact has the effect of inducing drowsiness in one. Are they intending to lay their hands on the Anthive Queen?" The Byzantium Helios Beast roared furiously, and the pressure pushing down on the mountain peak suddenly intensified, as if reflecting its rage.

"I'm afraid that seems to be the case. After knocking the two fellows out, I combed through the cavern, and while I saw marks of battle, I wasn't able to find the Anthive Queen itself. Thus, I took their storage rings thinking that I might find traces of the

Anthive Queen inside."

Under the rage of the Byzantium Helios Beast, the aerial spirit beast hurriedly explained with a trembling body, "As a spirit beast, I don't possess zhenqi, so I am unable to access the storage ring to ascertain whether the Anthive Queen has been captured or killed by them."

Following which, the aerial spirit beast raised its giant claws, and two storage rings came flying toward the Byzantium Helios Beast.

There were two conditions to opening a storage ring. First, one had to be the owner of the storage ring, or the storage ring had to be ownerless. Second, one had to possess zhenqi. For some reason, the Byzantium Helios Beast had ordered them strictly against killing any of the master teachers in this operation, so Senior Feng and Brother Yu were still alive. On top of that, he didn't possess zhenqi, so he was unable to access the interiors of the storage ring.

"Allow me to take a look!"

While the rules above applied for most cases, with its immense might as a saint beast, the Byzantium Helios Beast could still access the storage ring through brute force. After grabbing hold of the rings, it placed its massive claws on it.

Following which, an overwhelmingly powerful soul seeped into the storage ring.

A moment later, the Byzantium Helios Beast shook its head and said, "The Myriad Anthive Queen isn't inside, and there is no inner core either. Most likely, it managed to escape from them. You should try looking for it once more."

"Yes!" Hearing that its companion was fine, the aerial spirit beast heaved a sigh of relief.

While the Soul Imprints were forcefully wiped off the storage rings, two unconscious figures lying halfway up the mountain suddenly spurted blood simultaneously before waking up.

They were Brother Yu and Senior Feng, who had been knocked out by the aerial spirit beast just a moment ago.

The forceful erasure of their Soul Imprints had inflicted internal injuries on them, leaving them with splitting headaches.

"My clothes and storage ring..."

Lowering their heads, the duo suddenly froze for an instant before their bodies started trembling.

Fearing that they might have hidden some other storage rings on them, the aerial spirit beasts had taken away their clothes as well. As a result, not only were the possessions of the duo taken away, they were also stark naked at the moment.

"What the heck is this?"

They were there to hunt spirit beasts, but to think that they would end up being stripped clean by the other party instead...

They would have understood it if it had just been their storage rings, but for their clothes to have been taken away as well... What the heck was going on?

Could it be that... the spirit beasts weren't just interested their possessions but their bodies as well?

With such a thought in mind, the duo hurriedly turned their gazes downward to look at their own bodies. Seeing that there were no signs of being taken advantage of, the duo heaved a slight sigh of relief. This was perhaps their only blessing amidst this misfortune.

It was only a while earlier that Brother Yu had declared confidently that he would compete with Zhang Xuan to see who was the superior one when such a situation occurred. How was he supposed to emerge victorious in such a state?

Putting aside competing with Zhang Xuan, he didn't even have a single inner core, putting him at risk of failing the examination!

What the heck was this!

While the other master teachers were gathering the skin, bones, and even inner cores of the spirit beasts, they were losing their storage rings and clothes...

It was fortunate that no one had seen them in their current state. Otherwise, they would have been too ashamed to face the world.

Standing up, Brother Yu hurriedly searched for a sufficiently large tree leaf to conceal his private parts. After which, with an indignant expression on his face, he said, "Let's quickly hunt down a few spirit beasts to make some clothes first... We can decide what to do afterward!"

"Yes!"

Senior Feng nodded in agreement.

The urgent matter at hand was to find something to wear. It was embarrassing to run around with one's bottom bare in public, even if there was no one around!

"It is fortunate that the Beastscale Incense is still here. With this, we can hunt even Cosmos Bridge realm spirit beasts easily..."

After wrapping a layer of tree leaves around his waist, Brother Yu looked around the area and saw a half-burnt Beastscale Incense lying in the vicinity. It seemed that the spirit beast who had attacked them hadn't taken it away from them.

Seeing that he still had this artifact with him, he immediately heaved a sigh of relief.

As long as he still had the Beastscale Incense, there was still a chance that he could make a comeback.

After all, while Zhang Shi might not be weak, defeating a Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage spirit beast would likely be his limit. On the other hand, with the Beastscale Incense, they could easily hunt down any Cosmos Bridge realm spirit beast and procure their

inner cores.

"Let's hurry!"

After covering whatever that needed to carry with leaves and vines, the duo hurriedly headed to the top of the mountain.

The higher up the mountain, the more likely it was that they would encounter stronger spirit beasts. With half of the time gone, their only hope of making a comeback was to go for quality instead of quantity.

As they flitted swiftly through the forest, the leaves on their waists swayed, revealing a sight consisting of both fairness and darkness...

...

"As long as the Myriad Anthive Queen is still alive, it will surely send its Myriad Ants to liaise with us soon. But until that happens, you'll have to fill in for it and ensure that everything goes according to plan!"

At the pinnacle of Leiyuan Peak, the Byzantium Helios Beast gave the aerial spirit beast its orders.

The aerial spirit beast nodded its massive head and confidently replied, "Don't worry!"

Without the Myriad Anthive Queen to relay messages here and there, they could only depend on this aerial spirit beast to scout the area and relay messages around.

"You can leave now!"

The Byzantium Helios Beast waved its massive claws.

"Yes!" The aerial spirit beast nodded before spreading its wings and soaring into the sky. After a short moment, it had already disappeared from view.

After the departure of the aerial spirit beast, the Byzantium Helios Beast's body tightened, and its massive body floated up

slightly. It turned its head to the side to glance at a certain direction with a sharp gleam in its eyes.

"That fellow hiding over there, you can come out now!"

This wasn't spoken in the Ancient Beast Language but in the human tongue.

"So, I have been noticed..."

The Byzantium Helios Beast was looking directly at where Zhang Xuan was hiding. Realizing that he had been spotted, Zhang Xuan's body stiffened, and the blood running through his veins froze.

He thought that he had done a good job hiding his presence, but to think that... he was still discovered!

Chapter 716 Rip Him a New One

But this was to be expected!

Perhaps a Half-Saint or Nascent Saint might find it difficult to notice him when his aura was completely concealed, but the same tricks would not work on a Saint.

Upon reaching Sainthood, one's entirety would become completely aligned with nature. The authority of nature would be imbued into every single gesture and movement of one. Even if Zhang Xuan had been buried deep inside the snow, it was likely that the Byzantium Helios Beast would still have been able to notice him.

Just like how Transcendent Mortals were higher existences to Fighters, Saints were superior existences to Transcendent Mortals.

'I was still noticed in the end.'

Knowing that there was little point to continue hiding, Zhang Xuan took in a deep breath before standing up.

It should have been that slight spiritual energy disturbance which he'd caused by a slight mistake earlier that had betrayed his presence. Most likely, the only reason the Byzantium Helios Beast allowed Zhang Xuan to continue listening to their conversation was because it was certain that he was unable to comprehend the Ancient Beast Language. Thus, there was no worry about information leaking out.

As such, it decided to first finish the discussion with the aerial spirit beast before dragging Zhang Xuan out from his hiding place.

The Byzantium Helios Beast assessed Zhang Xuan and asked, "You are a new student in the Master Teacher Academy?"

Upon reaching Sainthood, spirit beasts would undergo an evolution which allowed them to speak human speech.

"Yes!" Knowing that it was impossible for him to play any tricks before the other party, Zhang Xuan nodded obediently.

"To be able to reach Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle and find this location despite having yet to officially enroll at the academy, you are truly not bad at all. Even if you aren't the top of this batch, you won't be too far from that."

After taking a look at Zhang Xuan's cultivation, the Byzantium Helios Beast nodded in agreement.

"It's nothing much!"

Zhang Xuan chuckled lightly in response. At the same time, his hands were fiddling behind his back, seemingly trying to do something.

"Don't try those little tricks with me... I can't guarantee you that I'll be able to control my temper!"

Noticing the little actions Zhang Xuan was up to, the Byzantium Helios Beast harrumphed.

"Temper?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head as he assessed the Byzantium Helios Beast impassively. "Those are my words. I'm afraid that I might just lose control myself and accidentally pummel you to death!"

"What did you say?" The Byzantium Helios Beast was visibly stunned by the arrogant words spouted by the young man before it. As the shock gradually retreated, fury swiftly took its place.

It was a saint beast whereas the other party was nothing more than a Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator. Even without moving a single inch, it could kill that young man with just its soul itself. Yet, the other party still dared to threaten it, saying that he couldn't control his temper and might pummel it to death?

'Do you know what kind of existence you are speaking to?

'Conceited fool!'

"You seem to be very confident in yourself." With a livid face, the Byzantium Helios Beast harrumphed coldly. A blazing fury ignited in its eyes, threatening to burn down everything in sight.

"This is not confidence; I am merely stating a fact. Alright, I'll give you a chance. As long as you acknowledge me as your master, I can spare you from death," Zhang Xuan said casually with his hands behind his back, seemingly thinking nothing of the situation before him at all.

"It is always the ignorant who are fearless, it seems you have no idea who you are speaking to. Since that's the case, allow me to hammer humility into your bones!"

Not expecting that an existence which was little more than an ant to it would arrogantly command it to acknowledge him as its master, even boasting to kill it should it refuse the offer, the face of the Byzantium Helios Beast turned livid. The fur across its entire body suddenly rose in fury, and with a wrathful roar, it abruptly raised its palm.

Huala!

A dense congregation of spiritual energy gathered instantaneously to form a massive palm that seemed to cover the entire sky. It felt as if the entire mountain could be flattened should the Byzantium Helios Beast will for it to happen.

Saint beasts might still be unable to cultivate zhenqi, but in exchange, they possessed earth-shattering physical might that could move mountains and split oceans. Putting aside a mere mountain, even wiping away an entire nation such as Tianxuan Kingdom was as easy as breathing to it.

Before the palm could even land, the immense pressure from the palm had already melted the thick layer of snow in the area. It felt as if a comet was hurtling toward this area.

"Hammer humility into my bones? I wonder who the one being

arrogant here is..."

Zhang Xuan stood composed even before the devastating might of the palm. Instead, he chuckled lightly and clapped. "Vicious, rip him a new one!"

Even against a Saint, Zhang Xuan had his own trump cards as well.

The twenty or so puppets he had obtained from the underground chamber all possessed the might of a Saint. Beating a Saint 1-dan saint beast should be no trouble at all!

After all, the supreme existence which had boasted to rival Kong shi in a fight in the past was lying right in his hands... Vicious!

This fellow might be trapped in the Book of Heaven's Path at the moment, leaving him immobilized and vulnerable, but his strength was still no joke. Even if ten Byzantium Helios Beasts were to turn up, it would be far from sufficient to slaughter him!

Boom!

As Zhang Xuan raised his hand, an opened book suddenly appeared above his palm. A beating heart could be seen on a page in the book.

"Break!" commanded an authoritative voice.

Huala!

It was as if the word carried some mystical might. The palm which the Byzantium Helios Beast struck out suddenly shattered like glass, turning into spiritual energy that dissipated swiftly into the surroundings.

"What..."

Seeing how the young man's artifact overcame his attack just by uttering a single word, the eyes of the Byzantium Helios Beast narrowed in astonishment.

With a cultivation realm of Saint 1-dan pinnacle, its true strength

ranked among the top experts of Hongyuan Empire!

It thought that dealing with a Cosmos Bridge realm brat would be a walk in the park, but who knew that the other party would possess an artifact which could overcome its attack with just a single word?

'Run!'

An ominous foreboding gripped the Byzantium Helios Beast. True to its instincts, it leaped into the sky without any hesitation.

Even though it didn't possess wings, as a saint beast, it was still capable of flight.

It didn't fear the young man; what it feared was the enigmatic artifact the other party wielded. Unsure of the capabilities of the artifact, the Byzantium Helios Beast chose to run away and rally additional help to deal with the young man instead of taking the risk.

"You wish to escape before my presence? Dream on!"

Barely after flying to a height of several dozen meters, a frigid voice suddenly sounded below. Following which, an overwhelming killing intent suddenly assaulted the Byzantium Helios Beast's mind, leaving its consciousness blank.

'Otherworldly Demonic Tribe...'

That momentary lapse in its consciousness dispelled the force which was levitating the Byzantium Helios Beast, resulting in its plummet from the sky. Putong! It fell head first into the snow.

"Little Vicious, not bad at all. It seems you aren't all talk!"

Not expecting Vicious to be so formidable, crushing the Byzantium Helios Beast's attack with a single utterance and felling it with a single thought, Zhang Xuan stroked the heart in the book in commendation.

"..." Vicious twitched violently in response to the praise, unable

to utter a single word in response.

The Byzantium Helios Beast also happened to see this sight just as it raised its head off the surface of the ground, and it nearly spurted blood.

Even though it had no idea what was sealed in the book, there was no doubt that the being inside was an existence that used to stand at the very top of this continent. The Byzantium Helios Beast had suspected that it might be the young man's teacher or guardian, but who could have thought...

The young man would actually stroke the supreme expert as if he were a pug!

Wasn't there something very wrong with this picture here!

Who in the world was the young man?

'That killing intent... That heart is most probably an expert of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. As such, could this young man be an Otherworldly Demon who is hoping to infiltrate the Master Teacher Academy?'

Upon realizing this possibility, the Byzantium Helios Beast suddenly felt its blood turn cold.

Legend has it that the royal family of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe possessed the ability to disguise themselves as humans and even master teachers, and no one would be able to tell the difference.

Back then, there was one such Otherworldly Demon that had successfully infiltrated the core group of the master teachers. With the secrets it had obtained, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe had nearly crushed the Master Teacher Pavilion.

If not for Kong shi's astuteness which led him to notice that something was amiss, the ones who would be ruling the Master Teacher Continent now would be the Otherworldly Demons and not the human race!

No matter how it looked at the young man, he was no different from an ordinary human. Could he really be Otherworldly Demon royalty? Otherwise, how could he possibly get off unscathed after treating such a powerful expert of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe like a dog?

"I will kill you..."

Realizing the potential threat that the young man posed to the Master Teacher Pavilion, the eyes of the Byzantium Helios Beast immediately turned crimson in rage.

If its conjecture was right, it would have to stop this young man from getting into the Master Teacher Academy at all costs. Otherwise, who knew what kind of danger he would bring upon the academy or even the entire human race in the future?

Hu!

Pushing against the ground, the Byzantium Helios Beast suddenly lunged toward Zhang Xuan like a bolt of lightning. With the astounding might it possessed in its body and the frightening speed it was moving at, there was little doubt that Zhang Xuan would be reduced to dust if its body were to crash into him.

Vicious was still contemplating how he should negotiate with Zhang Xuan regarding his release considering the merits he had just achieved when he noticed the Byzantium Helios Beast charging over once more. Angry that the other party was getting in his way, it bellowed furiously, "Kneel down!"

'Just because I am sealed in a book now doesn't mean that you can climb over my head!

'To dare to kill a Celestial Master Teacher recognized by the heavens itself, as well as the man who governs my fate, how brazen you are!'

Boom!

With his bellow, the unique killing intent which Otherworldly

Demons possessed assaulted the Byzantium Helios Beast's mind once more. As if a fly swatted down, the latter immediately crashed into the ground and slid uncontrollably.

While Vicious' strength was severely impaired at the moment, dealing with a mere Saint 1-dan beast was not much different from smacking a mosquito.

Suppressed on the ground by an incredible force, the Byzantium Helios Beast glared at Zhang Xuan with crimson eyes. It bellowed frenziedly in indignation, "Damn you, I will rip you into pieces..."

"You are so eager to kill me?"

Seeing the other party's attitude, Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless.

This lapdog of the Otherworldly Demons sure was arrogant!

It must have realized the threat he posed to the Otherworldly Demons due to his superior talent, so it had decided to end him while his abilities hadn't matured yet.

"That's right! Even if it costs my life, I'll drag you down to hell with me!" the Byzantium Helios Beast roared.

"I see..."

Those words had helped Zhang Xuan make up his mind. Snapping his finger, he pointed to the Byzantium Helios Beast and ordered, "Put your feet in that beast!"

Huala!

All of a sudden, twenty puppets suddenly materialized amidst the white snow.

Since that fellow was bent on killing him, there was no need to stand on ceremony with it.

Roar!

The puppets roared simultaneously as they stormed forward

furiously.

Hu!

The first puppet to arrive planted its feet right into the Byzantium Helios Beast's face, sending it flying into the air. Before the latter could even respond, another puppet that had been lying in wait behind shot a fist onto its back, pushing it back to the ground.

Peng peng peng peng!

The Byzantium Helios Beast was thrown around the place, and bright, red swellings swiftly emerged all over its body. Large mouthfuls of blood spilled from its mouth.

'Otherworldly Demon puppets? As expected, he is a member of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe's royal family... Damn it, damn it!'

The appearance of so many Otherworldly Demon puppets at once only served to reinforce the Byzantium Helios Beast's conjecture. After all, other than the royal family of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, who else could command such a powerful expert and so many Otherworldly Demon puppets?

Rage and indignation permeated its soul. If only it had noticed earlier and killed the young man swiftly, he could have avoided a calamity. But alas, it was too late now...

Under the assault of twenty Saint 1-dan puppets, it was completely helpless!

Not to mention, it was currently immobilized by the killing intent from the heart!

After countless fists and kicks had landed on its body, the Byzantium Helios Beast found its sight slowly darkening, and its consciousness was slowly drifting away.

Just as the Byzantium Helios Beast thought that it would be

killed, the impassive voice of the young man suddenly sounded once more.

"How about now? Have you changed your mind yet? If you acknowledge me as your master, I can spare you from death!"

Chapter 717 The Miserable Byzantium

Helios Beast

At the foot of Leiyuan Peak, with the swift flash of a shadow, a human and a saint beast landed on the ground.

"Elder Mo!"

The human stepped forward and clasped his fist with a smile.

"Pavilion Master Mo!" Elder Mo hurriedly returned the greetings.

The person who had just arrived was none other than the pavilion master of the Hongyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion, Mo Gaoyuan!

Even though he wasn't a member of the Ten Great Master Teachers, his standing and capability was on par with them.

"Langya Saint Beast!" Elder Mo turned to the saint beast by the side and clasped his fist in greeting as well.

Mo Gaoyuan's tamed beast, Saint 1-dan primary stage Langya Saint Beast!

As fellow Saints, there was a need to maintain basic ceremonial respect.

"Greetings to Elder Mo!" The Langya Saint Beast replied in human tongue.

After the formalities, Elder Mo turned to Mo Gaoyuan and asked doubtfully, "May I know the reason behind Pavilion Master Mo and Langya Saint Beast's arrival?"

The Master Teacher Pavilion and Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy could be considered as equal existences under the direct command of the same Conferred Empire headquarter. As such, the Master Teacher Pavilion had no authority to interfere with the recruitment of the Master Teacher Academy.

"I heard that there are many talented students in this batch, so I dropped by to take a look..." Mo Gaoyuan chuckled.

Since this was the entrance examination, Zhang shi had to be there as well. Mo Gaoyuan was intending to improve his relationship with him, as well as to make use of this opportunity to ask about Yang shi.

Hearing that the other party was only here to spectate, Elder Mo secretly heaved a sigh of relief and replied while stroking his beard, "There are indeed quite a few talented students this year, but it's hard to tell whether they will be able to pass the examination or not!"

"Oh? Is there something deeper to the examination?" Mo Gaoyuan asked in bewilderment.

The purpose of the examination should be to sieve out the talented students from the mediocre ones. Otherwise, what would be the point of conducting an entrance examination?

"Isn't the test this year regarding hunting Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle spirit beasts? To those talented students, it shouldn't be hard to clear this mission!"

The entrance examination of the Master Teacher Academy was a huge affair in Hongyuan Empire. As the head of the regional Master Teacher Pavilion, how could he remain unaware of the matter?

While it might be difficult for a 4-star master teacher to defeat a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle spirit beast in a straightforward battle, it shouldn't be too difficult for them to clear the mission if they were to prepare themselves beforehand.

"The admission criteria of the Master Teacher Academy isn't based on whose fist is the strongest. If it were just mere hunting, don't you think this entrance examination would be a little too easy for them?" Elder Mo chuckled. "Thus, I prepared a little

surprise for them!"

"Oh?" Elder Mo was taken aback. He traded astonished glances with Langya Saint Beast.

When the both of them had heard the rules of the entrance examination earlier, they also found certain aspects of it slightly unusual. After listening to Elder Mo's words, they realized that there might be another side to the examination.

"On the surface, the examination is a hunting contest where the one who gathers the most inner cores wins. However, I have designed it in a manner such that it will test the examinees' adaptability and reactions in times of danger!" Elder Mo said with a smile. There was no need for him to hide this matter from Mo Gaoyuan. "In truth, the spirit beasts on the mountain have been organized to coordinate with one another to deal with the examinees. They have prepared bait and traps to lure the examinees into their encirclement!"

"Encirclement?" Mo Gaoyuan's eyebrows shot up anxiously. "But those examinees are the Master Teacher Pavilion's future..."

"Don't worry, the spirit beasts have been strictly warned against claiming their lives!" Knowing what Mo Gaoyuan was thinking, Elder Mo hurriedly reassured him.

Those were the fresh blood of the Master Teacher Pavilion, the pillars who would prop up the organization as well as humanity in the future. Even as one of the Ten Great Master Teachers, he dared not put them in such grave danger at his own whim.

Thus, he had made precautions to ensure that the spirit beasts would only trap and wound the examinees.

Otherwise, how could Ding shi and the others hold on for so long until Zhang Xuan's intervention came without suffering even a single casualty? One must know that they were encircled by several hundred spirit beasts, and a significant proportion of them

was even at the Cosmos Bridge realm!

However, due to the tense situation then, no one noticed this oddity. Even Zhang Xuan had overlooked this fact.

"I see!"

Mo Gaoyuan heaved a sigh of relief. With the safety of the students off his mind, he began thinking about the examination, and his eyes slowly gleamed in excitement. "So, this is actually an emulation of a war between the spirit beasts and the master teachers. Regardless of whether the examinees are able to see through the crux of this test or not, this will be a good learning experience for them. This will teach them not to underestimate their opponents and keep their guards up at all times, as well as to cultivate their teamwork and make them realize that the strength of an individual is insignificant in the face of a horde... As expected of Elder Mo, this is an incredible work!"

After their failure, the examinees would understand that master teachers weren't almighty. They might be a member of the most prestigious occupation in the world, but they would be sorely mistaken if they thought that none could threaten them. In a sense, this examination served to correct their attitudes before their enrollment.

Elder Mo received the compliment graciously with a nod.

"The idea is good, but restraining so many spirit beasts at once is no easy feat. I guess only a 6-star pinnacle beast tamer like Elder Mo is capable of doing this on such a scale!" Mo Gaoyuan commented in awe.

Since there were thirty thousand examinees on the mountain, the number of spirit beasts on the mountain couldn't be any lower than twenty thousand. To force so many haughty beasts to obey commands and hold themselves back after cornering their preys, how capable must one be to achieve this feat?

Elder Mo shook his head with a bitter smile.

"Me? How could I possibly have the capability to do so? I have merely borrowed the strength of a saint beast!"

He might be a 6-star pinnacle beast tamer, but taming over twenty thousand spirit beasts and forcing them to obey his commands was still beyond him.

"Saint beast? Your Inferno Dragon Saint Beast?" Mo Gaoyuan asked.

Everyone knew that Elder Mo had a Saint 1-dan intermediate stage tamed beast, Inferno Dragon Saint Beast. It was a powerful saint beast capable of breathing flames.

"Inferno Dragon? That fellow is violent and impatient; I already thank the heavens if it manages to stay out of trouble, so how could I possibly delegate such an important matter to it? The one which I invited over to help me with this examination is the Byzantium Helios Beast!" Elder Mo replied.

"Byzantium Helios? You mean the old principal's tamed beast?" Mo Gaoyuan realized.

Elder Mo nodded.

"I see, there's indeed nothing to worry about if Byzantium Helios is on the job. Given its capability, no spirit beast will dare to disobey its commands."

Mo Gaoyuan nodded as well.

"On top of that, Byzantium Helios Saint Beast is well-versed in the Ancient Beast Language, so it is unlikely that anything will go wrong in this examination," Elder Mo replied.

As the tamed beast of the old principal, the Byzantium Helios Saint Beast shared equal standing with him, and no one dared to defy it. Even though the academy was currently headed by the Ten Great Elders, it still retained its esteemed standing.

But ever since the disappearance of the old principal in the midst of a mission, the Byzantium Helios Saint Beast had spent its days in desolation, never interfering in the matters of the academy anymore. Elder Mo had to pay a hefty price to convince it to help him with this matter. Even now, he could still feel his heart aching whenever he thought about it.

Nevertheless, it was well worth the price.

With the assistance from the Byzantium Helios Saint Beast who was well-versed in the Ancient Beast Language, there would be no need for Elder Mo to worry about any trouble cropping up in this examination.

Logically speaking, since most saint beasts were well-versed in the Ancient Beast Language and the human tongue, they could impart the knowledge to the beast tamers and fill in the missing gap in the heritage... However, there was a vast difference in the vocal organs of a saint beast and those of a human, thus resulting in a significant difference in the way each syllable could be voiced.

The Ancient Beast Language was the speech natural to the constitution of most beasts. On the other hand, the human body was incompatible with the Ancient Beast Language. Thus, a unique zhenqi circulation method was required for humans to emulate the various sounds in the Ancient Beast Language.

Thus, it was nigh impossible for humans to learn how to speak the Ancient Beast Language from saint beasts.

Besides, given that saint beasts were capable of speaking the human language, the language barrier that had impeded beast tamers from communicating with beasts had already collapsed. This removed the fundamental need for beast tamers of 6-star and above to learn the Ancient Beast Language. Even if, under some circumstances, they really had to communicate with a savage beast or spirit beast, they could always get their saint beast to translate for them.

"With the Byzantium Helios Saint Beast overlooking the examination, there is no need to worry about the examinees' safety. I only fear that it might be too harsh on the examinees. It would be a calamity if none of the examinees were to pass the examination," Mo Gaoyuan said.

Perhaps due to the influence of the old principal, the Byzantium Helios Beast also had an austere personality. If it were to heighten the difficulty of the examination by too much, it might come to the point where not even a single examinee could pass the examination.

"Don't worry, I have already talked to the Byzantium Helios Beast regarding this matter. The examinees will only be trapped for a period of time. They will be released a few hours before the end of the examination..." Elder Mo replied. At which, he suddenly pointed to the mountain before of him and smiled. "Look, there are already a few examinees who have cleared the examination!"

Turning to the direction in which Elder Mo was pointing, Mo Gaoyuan saw a group of people climbing down the mountain, walking toward where they were standing.

It was noon at the moment. Considering how there was still some time before the reporting time in the evening, they must have cleared the examination in advance and were returning to report.

"T-that... what is happening?"

Upon seeing those figures, Elder Mo was just about to walk over to them to check their points when his eyes suddenly widened.

Trailing behind that group of people were a few hundred spirit beasts. Their heads were hung low, reminiscent of defeated roosters.

"It looks like... someone has tamed them?"

Swallowing a mouthful of saliva, Mo Gaoyuan's lower jaw nearly hit the ground.

Beast taming was one of his supporting occupations, so he could instantly tell that those spirit beasts had been tamed by someone. Otherwise, the heads of those haughty spirit beasts wouldn't have been lowered subserviently.

A group of two hundred examinees had actually tamed around five hundred spirit beasts?

Didn't the Byzantium Helios Beast organize the spirit beasts to have them encircle the students and teach them a lesson?

Then.... what was going on here?

...

On the other hand, at the top of Leiyuan Peak, the Byzantium Helios Beast clenched its jaws and roared furiously, "You want me to acknowledge you as my master? Dream on..."

As the tamed beast of the old principal of Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, how could it possibly submit to an Otherworldly Demon?

Even beasts had their own sense of morality!

While it was likely that the old principal was already dead, it couldn't simply overlook the kindness that the old principal had shown it and submit to the enemy just to live on!

"Dream on?"

Not expecting the saint beast which had submitted to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe to have such backbone, Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Continue pummeling it! Beat it until it submits!"

Upon those commands, the puppets began another round of brutal beating.

Five minutes later...

The most powerful spirit beast of the academy which possessed equivalent standing to the principal saw its life flashing before its eyes, and it could nearly see a ray of light in the distance beckoning

it.

"Forget it, it's fine if you are unwilling to submit. I'll ask you some questions now, and if you don't answer them honestly, I'll extract your soul after your death and bring eternal anguish upon you!"

Seeing how the Byzantium Helios Beast was still hanging on obstinately despite being on the verge of death, Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Did you come here to harm the freshmen of the Master Teacher Academy under the orders of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe? As long as you spill out the location of those Otherworldly Demons, I can reward you with a painless death!"

"Under the orders... of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?"

Gazing at Zhang Xuan with eyes so swollen that they could barely open, the Byzantium Helios Beast nearly fainted on the spot.

'Orders your head!

'I only came here under Elder Mo's relentless persuasion and generous promises. The reason I am here is to temper more powerful master teachers to bring humanity to greater heights...

'What the heck does this have to do with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?

'On the other hand, you are the suspicious one!

'To deal with me using the heart of an Otherworldly Demon expert before pummeling me with those Otherworldly Demon puppets...

'And yet...

'You still asked me if I am under the orders of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe? Can you get even more shameless than that?'

Chapter 718 Storing in the Storage Ring

"Why? You are still refusing to admit it?"

Seeing the other party's twitching lips—a sign of obstinacy—Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

If this fellow continued like that, he wouldn't mind resorting to even more extreme methods—Soul Torment!

Soul Torment was a soul oracle technique where an extracted soul would be put through unimaginable anguish so as to force it to speak. It was usually used for interrogation purposes, and rarely had it ever failed.

However, this would cause the soul of the interrogated to be wiped cleanly off the face of this world, never to be reincarnated again. Due to the callousness of this technique, Zhang Xuan had always been unwilling to utilize it. Who could have known that this fellow would be such a tough nut to crack!

He had heard the conversation between the Byzantium Helios Beast and the aerial spirit beast clearly.

'You arranged for the aerial spirit beast to encircle the master teachers, and you still dare to deny the matter before me. Do you really take me for a fool?

'Do you think that I dare not kill you?'

"Kill me then! Do I look like the type to fear death? I would rather die than to betray my master!" the Byzantium Helios Beast spat through clenched jaws.

The other party was clearly trying to sully its reputation. If it were to give in, the honor it had built using the entirety of its life would collapse in an instant. It would rather die than to live dishonorably!

The old principal had dedicated his life to protecting humanity.

As his tamed beast, how could it ever face its master if it were to submit to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?

"Continue beating him up!"

Not expecting this fellow to be so loyal to its Otherworldly Demon master, to the extent that it would rather die than to betray the latter, Zhang Xuan frowned in displeasure.

"Cough cough..."

Just as the puppets were about to launch another wave of punches and kicks on the Byzantium Helios Beast, Vicious suddenly spoke up. "Master, I fear that it might really die here if we continue beating it."

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan suddenly realized that that the Byzantium Helios Beast was already teetering on the edge of life and death. If it were pummeled any further, it might just die on the spot.

"What should I do?"

Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in frustration.

It was so much easier to deal with other spirit beasts—with a stick and a carrot, they would submit readily. Yet, this fellow just refused to budge!

Even though Zhang Xuan had put the words harshly, he had no intentions of killing the Byzantium Helios Beast at all.

Soul Torment was not entirely reliable, especially against particularly stubborn individuals. If the Byzantium Helios Beast were to die and the Soul Torment were to fail, the only lead would be lost. As long as the Otherworldly Demons behind this incident remained scot free, the Master Teacher Academy would remain in danger!

Such incidents could easily happen again and again.

Furthermore, if Zhang Xuan were to be enrolled in the Master

Teacher Academy, his safety would be affected as well. He didn't want to be schemed against once more.

"I see... I'll treat it first before you continue pummeling it. I don't believe that it can keep up its obstinacy for long!"

After a moment of contemplation, an idea suddenly came into mind. Zhang Xuan took out a wine gourd and infused his zhenqi into it.

After that previous incident, Zhang Xuan realized that it was exceptionally convenient to conceal the Heaven's Path zhenqi through the overpowering scent of wine. Thus, he decisively bought several gourds of wine and kept them in his storage ring.

He poured the gourd's wine on the Byzantium Helios Beast's injuries, but it took two hours for the latter to heal from its external wounds.

Pondering over the matter for a moment, Zhang Xuan realized that this could be due to the disparity in their cultivation realms. With his current cultivation of Cosmos Bridge realm, it would only take a few moments for his zhenqi to heal those of equivalent cultivation. However, against the significantly stronger body of a Saint, his zhenqi was clearly still far too weak.

After healing the latter's external wounds, Zhang Xuan had four puppets to hold the Byzantium Helios Beast while another two pried open its mouth. Just like that, he forced the wine into its mouth.

After using up four to five gourds and an entire hour, the Byzantium Helios Beast finally recovered from its internal injury as well.

"Alright... Continue pummeling it!"

After seeing that the other party had recovered from its injuries, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

As long as the Byzantium Helios Beast didn't die, he had all the

time in the world.

'Death? With my Heaven's Path zhenqi, let's see how you can die! With an unending session of pummeling, there will surely come a day when you give in!'

Roar!

After hearing the instruction, the puppets immediately charged forward excitedly and began another round of pummeling.

Soon, hideous crimson swellings returned onto the body of the Byzantium Helios Beast, and its breathing grew ragged.

After treating it with the Heaven's Path zhenqi again, yet another pummeling session rained down on the Byzantium Helios Beast.

After three consecutive cycles, light had vanished from the Byzantium Helios Beast's eyes, and it seemed to be nearing the limits of its tolerance.

But even so, it still refused to spout the slightest word regarding the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. In a sense, Zhang Xuan was also impressed by the other party's loyalty to its master.

"Let's stop here for today..."

Looking above him, Zhang Xuan realized that the sun was gradually descending in the west. If he didn't hurry back, he just might fail the examination. Thus, he could only halt the pummeling session for now.

It was frustrating how he had spent half a day of effort but still couldn't make a saint beast submit to him.

The Byzantium Helios Beast's loyalty toward its master was simply so strong that the usual tricks Zhang Xuan used were rendered completely ineffective.

Zhang Xuan knew that the only way was to slowly wear the Byzantium Helios Beast down mentally.

In any case, time was on his side.

"But this fellow is so big, am I to lug him around?"

To continue the questioning, Zhang Xuan would have to take the fellow away with him. However, considering the size of the Byzantium Helios Beast... how was he supposed to take it with him?

Of course, it was possible for Zhang Xuan to carry it around, but... No matter what, the Byzantium Helios Beast was a true saint beast. If others were to learn that he had managed to reduce it to such a pitiful state, their first doubt would be how he had managed to do so. The subsequent investigation might lead to the revelation of the existence of Vicious and the Otherworldly Demon puppets.

Since this concerned the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, it was best to proceed cautiously.

Besides, he had only arrived at the Master Teacher Academy recently, so he thought that it would be best for him to lie low. There was no need for him cause such a huge storm and have everyone know that even saint beasts were nothing before him.

"The Myriad Anthive Nest might be small, but it might still work if I were to force this fellow in..."

Zhang Xuan analyzed as he stroked his lower jaw.

The physique of the Byzantium Helios Beast bore some resemblance to an ape. If its head were to be planted into its pants before rolling its body together and fastening it with some rope, it might just be possible to stuff it into the small Anthive Nest.

In his previous life, there were some yoga experts whose bodies were so flexible that they could even fit into a tiny fish tank.

"I should give it a try!"

With this idea in mind, Zhang Xuan immediately dived into action. He took out strip of skin from a spirit beast he had hunted earlier and sliced it into a long rope using the Glacier Rain Sword before passing it to the puppets.

The puppets first pummeled the Byzantium Helios Beast into a state of near death before rolling it up and binding it with the rope. After which, they sent another few more kicks and punches at its body to further compress it.

In any case, the other party was a saint beast with incredible vitality, and it was being nourished by Zhang Xuan's zhenqi as well. It would be extremely difficult for it to die.

After some arduous effort, the Byzantium Helios Beast was finally compressed to a size that could be fitted into the Anthive Nest. Thus, Zhang Xuan flicked his hand and took out the nest. With another wave of his hand, he stored the Byzantium Helios Beast in the hive.

Peng!

In the hive, the Myriad Anthive Queen suddenly found itself being forcefully pushed to the sides of the hive. Its face was pressed tightly against the ceiling, and its body had distorted into a giant "大" word. It seemed as though its body would burst at any moment now.

The hive of two meters radius should have been a comfortable fit for it, but with the entry of the Byzantium Helios Beast, free space became something that was direly lacking in there. The Anthive Queen found itself on the verge of being suffocated to death.

It was fortunate that its physical constitution was still relatively strong. Otherwise, it might really burst from the immense pressure pushing against it.

Knowing that it was a squeeze inside, Zhang Xuan sheepishly instructed the Myriad Anthive Queen, "Just tolerate it for now. I'll free you after I find a suitable location!"

Both the Byzantium Helios Beast and the Myriad Anthive Queen were secrets that Zhang Xuan was unwilling to reveal. Thus, the only solution was to keep them hidden inside the hive for the time

being until he returned to his own dwelling.

After returning the Anthive Nest into the storage ring, Zhang Xuan scanned the surroundings one last time, and he suddenly spotted two storage rings on the ground.

They were the storage rings the aerial spirit beast had stolen from Brother Yu and Senior Feng.

The storage rings seemed to have fallen from the Byzantium Helios Beast during the vicious beating by the Otherworldly Demon puppets. Zhang Xuan picked the rings up and fused a droplet of his blood into each of the rings.

The Soul Imprint on the rings had already been wiped away by the Byzantium Helios Beast's forceful entry earlier, allowing Zhang Xuan to claim ownership of the rings directly.

"There are so many inner cores inside... This should be enough for me to clear the examination and win the bet. Looks like I need not hunt any further!"

Scanning through the content of the storage ring, Zhang Xuan found plenty of spirit beast inner cores inside.

Through the Beastscale Incense and Seeking Mouse, Brother Yu and Senior Feng had managed to track down and kill many spirit beasts.

While there shouldn't be a problem for Brother Yu and Senior Feng to clear the examination, it would be difficult for them to hunt down this many inner cores with the time that was left. Thus, it could be said that they had already lost the bet.

Aside from that, there were also several thousand middle-tier spirit stones along with all kinds of artifacts and formations inside the two storage rings.

"Those two fellows sure are wealthy. But this works fine as well, I happen to be lacking resources at the moment."

It just so happened that Zhang Xuan was a little poor at the moment, so the acquiring of these two storage rings could spare him quite a lot of trouble.

As for returning the storage rings...

That was a good joke!

It wasn't like he was the one who stole these storage rings. He had spent so much effort to defeat the Byzantium Helios Beast, and these two storage rings were his spoils of war!

Hu!

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to put those two storage rings in his pocket, he suddenly thought of something, and he immersed his consciousness back into the storage rings. A moment later, a jade token appeared in his palm.

A beautiful light flowed within the transparent jade token. This was the Aerial Strike Amulet which Brother Yu had staked on the bet!

He had checked this object with the Library of Heaven's Path earlier, and it was indeed a valuable artifact.

To think that he would end up obtaining it in such a manner.

'With this item in hand, I will be able to survive an attack from a Saint 1-dan!' Zhang Xuan thought as he placed the amulet into his bosom.

The Dragon Scale Protective Amulet he had acquired previously had saved him on multiple occasions, and this item was even more valuable than that.

With this, even if a Saint 1-dan were to creep up on him and launch a fatal blow, he would be able to get away unscathed.

As long as he overcame the initial assault, he would be able to release Vicious and his Otherworldly Demon puppets and reverse the situation.

'It is a pity that the Seeking Mouse isn't here...'

After putting away the storage rings, Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled the Seeking Mouse, and he shook his head in disappointment.

Considering the Seeking Mouse's ability to hunt down spirit beasts, it was indeed a valuable asset.

That aerial spirit beast had only been interested in uncovering the whereabouts of the Myriad Anthive Queen then, so it had probably only grabbed whatever possible clues there may be.

Once the Seeking Mouse had escaped, given its sharp nose, it would be hard to capture it once more.

"Let's return!"

After scanning through the straw cottage and finding no treasure at all, Zhang Xuan finally left the top of Leiyuan Peak in disappointment.

Right after pummeling the Byzantium Helios Beast, Zhang Xuan had the Anthive Myriad Queen instruct the aerial spirit beast to release all of the master teachers from the encirclement.

After being released from the encirclement, the master teachers would have to depend on their own capabilities to pass the examination.

After all, Zhang Xuan was no saint. All of the examinees should have come with the realization that they would be put in danger. If they were to be killed by the spirit beasts, they only had their own shortcomings to blame.

Executing the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, Zhang Xuan swiftly bypassed several valleys. He noticed several battles here and there, and it seemed like there were casualties on both sides as well. However, it was still within an acceptable range.

On the way down the mountain, there were also several spirit

beasts who attempted to provoke him, but they ended up being crushed with a single fist. Naturally, Zhang Xuan didn't forget to take their inner cores.

By the time he was approaching the foot of the mountain, there was already a huge crowd in the area. He looked around for a remote area to land before quietly following behind the crowd.

Chapter 719 Brother Yu's Harvest

Several long queues of master teachers extending all the way to the horizon could be seen on the plain at the foot of the mountain.

At the forefront of every single queue were upper-grade students from the academy. They were in charge of checking the quantity and grade of the inner cores procured by the examinees and tabulating the scores. From time to time, there were those who tried their chances by bringing out inner cores procured before the examination, but how could the eyes of a master teacher be fooled that easily?

Zhang Xuan had joined one of those queues. He curiously glanced at the spectacle ahead of him.

There seemed to be a couple of examinees who passed the examination, but those who failed seemed to be in the majority.

"The examination this year is too hard! From the looks of it, out of the thirty thousand examinees, perhaps only ten thousand will pass!"

"This is way too difficult! We have allied ourselves with the master teachers from two other empires, and we thought that we could clear the examination easily. Who could have known that we would end up falling for the spirit beasts' encirclement and suffer heavy losses?"

"We also fell into their trap as well! Our group of three hundred ended up being scattered by their onslaught, and eventually, fifty of us were grievously wounded in the encounter. After two hours of battle, right after noon, the spirit beasts suddenly retreated. Only then did we manage to hunt down a few spirit beasts, but it was still insufficient for most of us to clear the examination!"

"The spirit beasts who encircled us also retreated after noon. However, we weren't as lucky. There were simply too many

casualties among us, so we could only rest on the spot. In the end, we only managed to gather a handful of inner cores."

...

Proceeding forward, Zhang Xuan heard some discussions among the examinees.

'It is fortunate that we managed to avoid the worst situation...'

Hearing the discussions, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief instead.

It was fortunate that he had noticed and intervened in the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe's scheme early on. Otherwise, it would be hard to tell how many of the thirty thousand master teachers would still be breathing now.

Such loss would be severe even for the Master Teacher Pavilion!

'This credit... I guess I shan't claim it from the Master Teacher Pavilion!'

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan chose to hide this matter.

Unravelling the sinister ploy of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe and saving several ten thousand master teachers was a huge achievement. If reported, Zhang Xuan would be handsomely rewarded. At the very least, it shouldn't be difficult for him to obtain dozens of high-tier spirit stones from this.

But if so, it would be hard for him to explain about Vicious and the Otherworldly Demon puppets. These two were currently his most valuable asset, his life preservation means. They were more valuable than any spirit stones.

Thus, there was no choice but to forgo this credit.

'Such a pity...'

Having this opportunity slip right by his fingers, Zhang Xuan felt his heart ache.

If he could obtain several dozen high-tier spirit stones, that would be sufficient for him to cultivate up to Saint realm!

If there was any consolation, at least he managed to obtain the valuable Aerial Strike Amulet, and more importantly, the Myriad Anthive Nest and the Byzantium Helios Beast.

'If it comes down to it, I can always kill the Byzantium Helios Beast. Its meat can be broiled as soup, its bones and claws can be forged as weapons, its fur can be weaved as clothes, and its inner core is a valuable cultivation resource... Considering that these are parts of a saint beast, they should fetch quite a number of spirit stones!' Zhang Xuan thought as he stroked chin.

While it was a pity that he couldn't receive the rewards from the Master Teacher Pavilion, he should still be able to earn some wealth from dissecting the Byzantium Helios Beast and selling its parts.

'Yes. I should look into this matter after the examination. If that fellow still remains as obstinate as before...'

Thinking that it was a feasible solution, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. 'But when I sell it, I should make sure to do it discreetly so as to not reveal my identity. Otherwise, it may become hard to explain where the saint beast came from and how it was killed!'

The Byzantium Helios Beast was a Saint 1-dan pinnacle expert. In Hongyuan Empire, it could be considered as one of the strongest existence already.

If it became known that a freshman of the Master Teacher Academy had managed to hunt such a beast and dissected it to sell, it would surely cause a huge stir.

If the Ten Great Master Teachers were to come begging to take him in as their disciple, he would be put in a spot.

Just the thought of it left him with a splitting headache.

Why was remaining humble such a difficult task?

He had already made up his mind to study silently in the Master Teacher Academy and leave right after his strength had become satisfactorily... He didn't want to cause a huge stir as he did in the other empires and kingdoms.

To be seen as the God of Destruction despite being a master teacher was truly shameful.

Just as Zhang Xuan was in the midst of contemplation, he suddenly heard an interesting piece of news.

"You know, I heard that a batch of people returned at noon. Despite returning early, not only did they clear the examination, they even received a frightening number of points!" A master teacher who had managed to lay his hands on some intelligence revealed that in a hushed voice.

"Returned at noon? Frightening number of points? Who?" the second master teacher asked skeptically.

"I am not too sure. I only heard of the matter from the seniors in front. It seems like the current first place for the examination has a massive lead over the others!"

"Massive lead over the others? Do you mean that the person surpasses even Senior Hu from Wanyu Empire? I saw Senior Hu taking out 27 inner cores personally, and a couple of them were from Cosmos Bridge realm spirit beasts. All in all, he was awarded more than 700 points! Yet, someone actually achieved a score higher than him? Are you for real?"

The second master teacher widened his eyes in shock.

Most of those in their group didn't even manage to acquire a single point, but Senior Hu from Wanyu Empire actually managed to take out 27 inner cores. As such, this matter caused a huge stir amongst the examinees. Yet, there was actually someone who arrived at noon who did better than Senior Hu?

"I am unaware of the details as well. I only heard bits and pieces of the seniors' conversation..."

"Higher than 700 points? That man who returned at noon sure is incredible! It seems like there are indeed quite a few geniuses amongst the freshmen!"

Hearing the content of the conversation, Zhang Xuan nodded in commendation.

Considering how the inner core of a Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage spirit beast was worth 100 points, it would mean that one would have to slay at least six to seven of them to achieve a score of 700 points!

Most of the examinees were still at Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle. One could already be considered to be the elite of the group if one's cultivation was at Consonant Spirit realm. So far, the only Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator Zhang Xuan had seen was Brother Yu.

But even with Brother Yu's capability, slaying a Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage spirit beast was still an extremely difficult task.

Yet, a formidable genius had actually returned at noon and achieved a score far higher than 700 points. That person's capability was indeed frightening!

Based on Zhang Xuan's estimations, that person might even be on par with him.

'I really should find a chance to meet that incredible person. I wonder what kind of formidable figure could nurture such a talented genius!'

The more Zhang Xuan thought about it, the more impressed he felt.

"Massive lead over the others? Did he score a thousand points? But so what if he scored a thousand points, that is nothing at all!"

At that moment, a cold harrumph suddenly sounded.

Hearing such arrogant words, the conversing master teachers frowned and turned around. However, upon seeing the person who spoke those words, they subconsciously took a step back.

What appeared before their eyes were two young men dressed in beastskin. Despite their shabby appearance, the powerful aura they exuded revealed their incredible prowess.

One of them was at the Half-Cosmos Bridge realm whereas the other was a true Cosmos Bridge realm expert!

It was no wonder they were so confident. With their combined strength, even a Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage spirit beast wouldn't post a threat to them!

Just that...

Why were they both dressed in beastskin, as if they were from some kind of tribal village?

More importantly, the beastskin they wore was extremely crude. There was probably no adjective in the world that could describe how ugly it looked.

The weaker of the duo was even carrying a bag created out of beastskin...

To think that a half 5-star master teacher would actually be carrying a bag... Were they so poor that they couldn't even afford a storage ring?

While master teachers prided themselves on their humility, weren't the two of them being a little too humble?

Zhang Xuan also glanced over, and he realized that the both of them were familiar faces.

They were the duo who had made the bet with him... Brother Yu and Senior Feng!

Shouldn't the both of them be elegant and dashing gentlemen?

This newfound style of theirs...

They seem to be challenging their fashion sense a little too far...

"Zhang shi, it's good that you have returned. Do you dare to verify your score together with me?" Ignoring the astonished crowd, Brother Yu's lips crept up as he glanced at Zhang Xuan.

Even though his possessions had been stripped clean by a ferocious spirit beast earlier at noon, it was fortunate that he still had his Beastscale Incense. Through it, not only had he managed to hunt a fair number of spirit beasts, he had obtained even more inner cores than before!

With this, he was confident that he would be able to triumph over Zhang shi!

Perhaps, he might even overtake the current first place and make a name for himself in the Master Teacher Academy!

"Sure."

Zhang Xuan nodded.

While he had spent most of his time on the mountain questioning the Byzantium Helios Beast, he still managed to obtain a fair number of inner cores.

It shouldn't be too difficult for him to win against these two.

Sensing the strong rivalry between the beastskin master teachers and Zhang shi, the crowd hurriedly opened up a path for them to pass through.

In just a short moment, the trio arrived at the forefront of the queue.

"I have a bet with this Zhang shi, I hope you can tabulate our points for us!"

Looking at the few invigilating seniors ahead of them, Brother Yu bowed politely.

"Bet?"

The invigilating seniors frowned upon hearing those words.

"Indeed! Zhang shi and I have bet a high-tier spirit stone on who would obtain a higher score in this examination. I fear that he will renege on his promise, so I hope that you can help us judge this matter!" Brother Yu said.

"A high-tier spirit stone?"

"The stakes sure are high..."

Hearing the content of the bet, the examinees in the surroundings gasped in shock.

Even the seniors were taken aback as well.

They were Grade 2 students of the Master Teacher Academy, but they didn't dare to make such a huge bet either.

"To stake a high-tier spirit stone on a bet... The freshmen sure are getting gutsier with each passing year! Fine, I'll judge your bet!"

The senior remarked before nodding in agreement. "Pass your inner cores over."

"Alright!"

Brother Yu beckoned to Senior Feng, and the latter immediately took off his bag and opened it.

Huala!

A bunch of inner cores rolled onto the table.

"So many inner cores..."

"Consonant Spirit and Cosmos Bridge realm spirit beast inner cores... What is that?"

"Crimson in color, t-that is... a Perfect Harmonization realm primary stage spirit beast inner core! How is that possible?"

"The sharp aura reminiscent of a blade and the searing sensation

when gazing upon it, there is no doubt that this is the inner core of a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast!"

"To actually hunt and procure the inner core of a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast... It looks like the champion seat is going to change hands!"

"Indeed..."

...

Looking at the inner cores on the table, the crowd was stunned for an instant before a huge uproar broke out.

Putting aside the other inner cores, just the Perfect Harmonization realm primary stage spirit beast inner core was already worth a hulking 1000 points!

Even the genius who arrived at noon whom the seniors were speaking about was unlikely to compare to this!

It was no wonder the two of them were so arrogant. They had something to back up their words!

Chapter 720 Zhang Xuan's Loss

"He was able to kill even a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast?"

Zhang Xuan was startled for an instant before it suddenly hit him.

He didn't recall seeing any Beastscale Incense in the duo's storage ring when searching through them, and this meant that there was a high chance that the artifact was still on them.

If that was the case, they would indeed stand a good chance at slaying a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast.

Despite the rarity, there were still a couple of Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast roaming the mountain. If one were to comb the area thoroughly, one would surely be able to find a handful.

After Zhang Xuan took down the Byzantium Helios Beast, the spirit beasts lost their commander, and their coordination immediately broke down. Without anyone to rally and organize them, they ended scattering around the area individually. Under such circumstances, if one had an artifact like the Beastscale Incense in hand, one would surely be able to hunt down plenty of spirit beasts.

Just that, there was still one more matter that baffled Zhang Xuan... why were the two of them dressed in beastskin?

Did the aerial spirit beast strip them of their clothes as well?

Could it be that it had such inclinations?

Zhang Xuan shuddered at that thought.

Considering how the duo had their storage rings and weapons taken from them, it would be difficult for them to craft proper clothes. Most probably, they had barely put together their current

wear by tearing the hide of the spirit beasts they had hunted.

'How pitiful!'

Upon this thought, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but sympathize with the duo.

To think that two talented master teachers would end up getting stripped clean by a spirit beast and tossed into a mountain valley! Just the thought of it would leave anyone feeling sorry for them.

While Zhang Xuan was staring at the duo in sympathy, Brother Yu was currently enjoying the loud cheers from the crowd. Placing his hands behind his back, he turned to Zhang Xuan and gazed down on him with a look of superiority. "Zhang shi, I have already taken out my inner cores. Where are yours?"

"Mine?"

Knowing what was at stake, Zhang Xuan chuckled lightly and flicked his wrist. Another pile of inner cores immediately appeared on the table.

The inner cores which he had obtained from the duo and the inner cores he had procured from slaying the spirit beasts on the way back down added up to a substantial sum. It was quite an astonishing sight to see them appear all in one place.

However, there weren't any Perfect Harmonization realm inner cores within the pile.

"Luoyang Beast, Viridsmoke Beast, Seven Feeler Beast... Why do those inner cores look so familiar?"

Upon seeing the inner cores that Zhang Xuan had taken out, Brother Yu and Senior Feng glanced at one another in astonishment.

Somehow, the inner cores that Zhang shi took out seemed extremely similar to those they had procured in the morning.

"Perhaps there might be many of the same spirit beasts on the

mountain!"

Eventually, they convinced themselves as such.

After all, their storage rings were stolen by an aerial spirit beast, so how could they possibly fall into Zhang Shi's hands? The only plausible reason was that they had simply managed to kill the same spirit beasts. Considering that they were hunting spirit beasts on the same mountain, as slim as the chances may seem to be, there was indeed such a possibility.

"Even though that fellow has quite a few inner cores, he seems to be a little lacking compared to us. That fellow... is bound to lose!"

After the initial shock, Brother Yu's eyes lit up in agitation.

Honestly speaking, after knowing that the other party had defeated Senior Feng with a single finger and seeing how he had dared to put a high-tier spirit stone on the stake, doubts had begun sprouting in his mind, leaving him uneasy. However, upon seeing the quantity and quality of inner cores that the other party had taken out, Brother Yu immediately heaved a sigh of relief.

Chuckling confidently, Brother Yu turned to the invigilators and clasped his fist. "I hope that you can judge our scores!"

"Alright."

Seeing how the both parties of the bet had managed to procure so many inner cores, the seniors before the table were astonished. They hurriedly lowered their heads to tabulate the score of each pile.

A few moments later, a senior stood up, and gesturing to Brother Yu, he said, "This junior over here has a Perfect Harmonization realm inner core, 3 Cosmos Bridge realm inner cores, 26 Consonant Spirit realm inner cores, and 18 Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle inner cores. All in all, he has received a score of... 2658 points!"

"2658 points?"

"Th-this is too amazing!"

"I thought that it was already impressive that Senior Hu from Wanyu Empire achieved a score of 700 points, but to think that this fellow would be even more formidable! With 2000 points, he has probably already broken the record! It is no wonder he is so arrogant. With such strength and capability, it would be difficult for one not to be so!"

"I wonder how many points that master teacher who arrived at noon earned. Nevertheless, against a score of 2658, I doubt that he will be able to retain his throne..."

...

A commotion broke out in the surroundings.

There was quite a handful that wasn't able to obtain even a single point, and yet this fellow actually received a hulking score of 2658. Just the thought of it was inconceivable in itself!

"What score do you think Zhang shi will get?"

After the wave of shock calmed down, the curious eyes of the crowd instinctively gathered on Zhang Xuan.

Considering how the master teachers dressed in beastskin were able to obtain such a high score, the person whom they were going against should be a formidable figure as well!

Another senior who had been tabulating Zhang Xuan's score spoke up.

"Zhang shi has obtained 5 Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle inner cores, 3 Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage inner cores, 13 Consonant Bridge realm... All in all, he has received a score of 2580!"

"2580? To lose by only 70 points, that is truly a pity!"

Upon hearing the score, a moment of silence drifted in the surroundings before a huge commotion exploded.

It was one thing for the gap between both parties to be huge, but given that they were both in the two thousand range, and the gap between them was less than a hundred, it was indeed a huge pity for the losing party.

"I lost?"

Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

He'd thought that it would be difficult for the duo to win against him after the aerial spirit beast had stolen the storage rings from them, but who could have known that in just a few hours they were actually able to make a comeback?

Incredible!

As expected of the top geniuses of a region, they were truly not to be underestimated!

'But do I really have to hand over a high-tier spirit stone to them...'

Due to his complacency, Zhang Xuan had never thought that he would actually lose. He was fine with losing to the other party, but giving a high-tier spirit stone away? His heart might just bleed dry!

'Should I... take out the Myriad Anthive Queen?'

The troubled Zhang Xuan contemplated for a moment before shaking his head.

As the personnel in charge of intelligence in the operation against the master teachers on Leiyuan Peak, the Myriad Anthive Queen played a pivotal role in the operation, working as a direct assistant to the Byzantium Helios Beast. If he were to bring it out, he might risk alarming the Otherworldly Demons, which might trigger them to conduct even more extreme actions once they realized that their identity might have already been exposed.

If so, he would risk putting many in danger, especially since he couldn't warn the Master Teacher Pavilion of the matter due to his

personal reasons.

But if not, was he really to hand over the high-tier spirit stone to the other party?

"Alright, the results are clear. Zhang shi, what else do you have to say?"

Upon achieving victory, Brother Yu clenched his fists tightly, and his eyes gleamed in excitement.

"What else do I have to say?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "This is your combined score; it doesn't necessarily mean that you have won the bet against me."

"Indeed! How come their score is tabulated together as one?"

"Considering how the both of them hunted together, if the points were to be divided equally among them, Zhang shi would still be the winner..."

Upon realizing this fact, the crowd nodded in agreement.

The both of them had hunted together whereas Zhang shi had moved as an individual, but both sides still ended up achieving similar scores. No matter how one looked at it, it was clear that the latter was the winner!

As if expecting Zhang Xuan to speak those words, Senior Feng replied with a smile, "Elder Mo stated clearly in the rules that the allocation of points is up to the individual. Since that's the case, I'll just take 77 points and leave the rest to Brother Yu!"

"Shameless!"

"If that fellow only takes 77 points, that Yu fellow will have a total score of 2581 points, thus winning against Zhang shi by a margin of one point!"

"He is definitely doing it on purpose!"

"But this is indeed the rule Elder Mo has set. In that respect,

there's nothing wrong with what he is doing..."

...

Hearing Senior Feng's words, everyone fell speechless.

Elder Mo did say that examinees were allowed to freely allocate the points obtained from a hunt. If that fellow really took only 77 points from the hunt, Brother Yu would be left with 2581 points, thus putting him a single point higher than Zhang Shi... What a shameless action this was!

Ignoring the furious criticism from the crowd, Senior Feng clasped his fist politely and asked, "Seniors, may I know if this is allowed?"

"This..."

After a moment of hesitation, one of the seniors nodded. "Yes, this is permitted."

Since this was a rule set by Elder Mo, there was no way they could go against it.

"Thank you... Zhang Shi, what else do you have to say now? Even after taking away 77 points, Brother Yu is still one point above you. In the end, you still lost!"

The edges of Senior Feng's lips crept up.

After the numerous traumas he had suffered from this fellow, he finally managed to return the favor. Exhilaration surged in his heart with every thump, and he felt as if he could float into the skies in euphoria.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan kneaded his glabella in frustration.

The other party was right. Under the current state of affairs, he would still lose to Brother Yu.

Shaking his head, he turned to the seniors before him and asked, "Seniors, may I ask if the examination is over yet?"

"The examination?"

Hearing the question, the seniors turned their heads and glanced backward. Not too far away, an incense was placed on top of a stone pedestal. Beneath the coiling smoke trails, one could see that the incense was nearing its end.

The duration of the trial was a day. While most examinees used the movement of the sun to gauge the timing, an incense was still prepared to keep track of time precisely. At this moment, the sun had already set in the west, indicating the end of the day. But as long as the incense hadn't burned out yet, the examination couldn't be said to have ended.

The senior did a rough estimation and replied, "There are roughly ten minutes left..."

"Ten minutes?"

"That's right."

The senior nodded.

"Why? Are you still intending to dive back into the forest to hunt? Do you think that you can make it back within ten minutes?"

Realizing what Zhang Xuan was up to, Brother Yu burst into laughter.

The spirit beasts nearing the reporting venue had already been cleanly cleared away by the examinees descending from the mountains. It would be difficult to travel to the depths of the mountain in just ten minutes, but to find a spirit beast and return in that time period as well... How naive could one get?

His eyes were open, but he was clearly dreaming!

"There is indeed not much time left..."

Gazing at the incense above the stone pedestal, the other master teachers also nodded in agreement.

To find and hunt down a spirit beast from the mountain within ten minutes...

Unless one could fly, that would be impossible.

"Just admit defeat. Even if there are ten minutes left, you know that it's impossible for you to succeed. Besides, even though I chose to take 77 points, I can always give more points to Brother Yu if required. In other words, the only way for you to win against us is to kill one Cosmos Bridge realm or two Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle spirit beasts. Do you think that you can do it within ten minutes?" Senior Feng sneered coldly.

There was a disparity of 78 points between the both parties at the moment. If Senior Feng were to claim only a single point, Zhang Xuan would require 78 points to defeat Brother Yu.

The inner core of a Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle spirit beast was worth 40 points, so Zhang Xuan would have to kill two of them. Alternatively, he could also choose to hunt down a Cosmos Bridge realm spirit beast.

However, despite roaming the forest for an entire day, they'd barely found a handful of Cosmos Bridge realm spirit beasts. To find and hunt one down and bring back its inner core within ten minutes, the other party was clearly deluding himself.

"You're right... If it were just me, it would be difficult."

Ignoring the doubts from the crowd and Senior Feng's sneer, Zhang Xuan pinched his glabella and said, "But I don't want to lose, so I can only give it a try."

With those words, he raised his head and whistled sharply.

Wuuuuuu!

The next moment, a massive Great Violetwing Beast suddenly swooped across the air, swiftly disappearing into the depths of the mountains.

"That is... your half 9-dan tamed beast? But it can only be used once throughout the examination... You haven't used it yet?"

Senior Feng and Brother Yu's faces suddenly turned ghastly pale.

Chapter 721 You Are Zhang shi

"I haven't!" Zhang Xuan replied.

With his current strength, he didn't need to use the Great Violetwing Beast to deal with mere Cosmos Bridge realm and Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beasts.

As for an opponent of the Byzantium Helios Beast's level, it would be futile even if he were to send the Great Violetwing Beast at it. As such, throughout the examination, Zhang Xuan hadn't tapped into the strength of the Great Violetwing Beast yet.

"He actually hasn't used it yet..."

Brother Yu and Senior Feng's lips twitched, and they nearly burst into tears.

They had specially asked Elder Mo regarding the issue of high-tier spirit beasts before the examination, and the response they had received was that they could only be used once.

They'd thought that given how Zhang Xuan had managed to procure so many inner cores, he must have used the ability of his tamed beast. Who could have possibly known that his tamed beast would prove to be the decisive factor in their bet...

It might be difficult for them to hunt down a spirit beast within ten minutes, but for the half 9-dan Great Violetwing Beast, it was no issue at all.

Could they really fail due to this?

If that were to really happen, they might just cry their eyes out.

"Nevertheless, there's a chance that the Great Violetwing Beast might be unable to find a spirit beast, or that it won't be able to accomplish the feat within ten minutes. We still have hope!"

At this point, Brother Yu could only hold on dearly to this slither of hope.

So what if the other party used his Great Violetwing Beast? They hadn't lost yet!

Perhaps Lady Luck might just favor them!

'I can only hope for the best now...'

Ignoring the others, Zhang Xuan gazed into the sky.

When he was descending from the mountain, he noticed some trails which indicated the rough directions where spirit beasts might be hiding. In his whistle, he'd informed the Great Violetwing Beast of those locations, so capturing one shouldn't be a problem. The issue was with the tier of the spirit beast.

He could only win against Brother Yu if the spirit beast was at Cosmos Bridge realm.

Just as he was deep in thought, a huge gust of wind suddenly blew from the sky. The Great Violetwing Beast had finally returned, and gripped in its large claws was an aerial spirit beast.

'Not bad, you returned quite fast. But why does this spirit beast... look so familiar?'

Seeing how the other party had returned within two minutes, Zhang Xuan nodded in approval. However, upon catching sight of the spirit beast it had captured, he couldn't help but freeze for an instant.

Why did this fellow look so familiar?

It was then when it suddenly struck him. Wasn't this the fellow he had seen reporting to the Byzantium Helios Beast, as well as the one who had stolen Brother Yu and Senior Feng's storage rings?

It seemed like that fellow was in the midst of his flight when he bumped into the Great Violetwing Beast, so the latter chose to capture it.

'But this fellow...'

Zhang Xuan's lips twitched upon the realization. He hurriedly

turned his sights to Brother Yu and Senior Feng, and as expected, the eyes of the duo had reddened in fury. If looks could kill, that aerial spirit beast would have withered there and then.

"It is that fellow! Karma always strikes at the most unexpected situations..."

"This is great..."

Incapable of flight, it was nigh impossible for them to capture the aerial spirit beast and get even with it.

Nevertheless, they had already solemnly sworn to themselves to comb through the entire Leiyuan Peak to hunt that fellow down no matter how long it took. But by some stroke of luck, Zhang shi's tamed beast had actually managed to capture that darned fellow!

'The heavens are impartial!'

With this, not only would they be able to get their vengeance, they would also be able to retrieve their storage rings and boost their score further!

"Zhang shi, have your tamed beast throw that fellow down. I have some personal grudges to clear with it..." Brother Yu roared furiously in anger.

"Throw it down?"

Seeing that fellow's attitude, Zhang Xuan shook his head before gesturing to the Great Violetwing Beast.

Receiving the instructions, the Great Violetwing Beast hesitated for a moment before releasing its claws, leaving the aerial spirit beast to plummet to the ground.

Hu!

The Transcendent Mortal 7-dan spirit beast whizzed through the sky.

"Wait till I lay my hands on you..."

Recalling the humiliation of being stripped clean, Brother Yu pushed against the ground and leaped into the sky.

Gathering his might, he wrapped his zhenqi around his fist as if blazing flames.

"What is that fellow up to?"

"That spirit beast was captured by Zhang shi's tamed beast, why is he trying to kill it?"

The master teachers in the surroundings glanced at one another in confusion as they watched Brother Yu rushing frenziedly toward the spirit beast Zhang shi had captured.

Boom!

But at that moment, the Transcendent Mortal 7-dan aerial spirit beast suddenly opened its eyes, and with a forceful flap of its wings, it stabilized its posture before retaliating with its claws.

While it only managed to recover at that very instant, with its superior cultivation and positional advantage, it still managed to gain the upper hand.

Peng!

As the fist and the claw collided, Brother Yu felt as if a huge mountain had crushed down on him. An incomparably dense might struck him squarely, leaving his apertures bleeding from the impact.

Sou!

Under the immense force, the rising Brother Yu was suddenly smacked back down like a cannonball, leaving behind a huge depression in the ground.

Pu!

Fresh blood spurted from his mouth. The clash had left him severely wounded.

As talented as he was, he was only a Transcendent Mortal 6-dan Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage cultivator at the moment. Against a 7-dan Perfect Harmonization spirit beast, he was still far too lacking.

"Brother Yu..."

Not expecting such an outcome, Senior Feng hurriedly rushed forward to help his companion up. By the time he turned his sight back to the 7-dan aerial spirit beast, the latter was already heading off into the distance.

Panicked, Senior Feng exclaimed, "Zhang shi, that fellow is escaping..."

If that fellow were to get away, how were they supposed to get their storage rings back and exact vengeance?

"You're right," Zhang Xuan remarked nonchalantly, as if he was uninvolved in this matter.

Stunned by Zhang Xuan's nonchalance, Senior Feng's rage flurried. "Then what are you waiting for? Capture it!"

"Capture it? I would love to do so, but I am only allowed to use my tamed beast once. I have already used up my chance when my tamed beast brought it over here. If I were to use it once more, won't I be reported for flouting the rules?" Zhang Xuan said with a trouble expression on his face.

Of course he couldn't capture that fellow back! Otherwise, if the existence of the Byzantium Helios Beast were to be made known somehow, he could potentially land himself in trouble!

It was still better to keep out of trouble's way than to risk it.

Pu...

Hearing those words, Brother Yu, who had barely just recovered slightly from his injuries, couldn't help but spew another mouthful of blood out of frustration.

He was certain that the Great Violetwing Beast had sealed the aerial spirit beast's meridians beforehand, thus binding the latter's movement. How did the latter recover from that so quickly?

Furthermore, even if the aerial spirit beast did recover, the force of its attack was a little too strong... It was as if the Great Violetwing Beast had sided with the aerial spirit beast against him!

"This..."

While he was busy spurting blood, Senior Feng's body was trembling in frustration.

Why did he have to be so nosey and raise the concern regarding Zhang Shi's tamed beast? He'd thought that this rule would help him to subdue that fellow, but who knew that he would be the one suffering from it in the end!

Spewing yet a mouthful of fresh blood, Brother Yu howled furiously, "As long as you capture the aerial spirit beast back, I'm willing to admit defeat..."

As long as he could retrieve his storage rings, what did losing an Aerial Strike Amulet count as?

"You will admit defeat? Then... where is the Aerial Strike Amulet you promised me?" Zhang Xuan stretched out his hand, demanding for his possession.

"This..." Brother Yu's body stiffened.

'It has been stolen by that aerial spirit beast. Only after capturing it can I hand it over to you...'

"Don't worry. As long as you capture that fellow, I'll hand it over to you..." Brother Yu replied, gritting his teeth.

"That won't do. You will have to hand the Aerial Strike Amulet over first before I will instruct my spirit beast to capture that fellow. I am taking a huge risk here by doing this; you know that my actions might be taken as flouting the rules, thus putting me at

risk of disqualification, right? The least you can do is to show your sincerity," Zhang Xuan replied.

"You..."

Brother Yu was on the verge of exploding from frustration. "Don't worry! I, Yu Cheng, vow that even if I don't have the Aerial Strike Amulet, I will compensate you with a high-tier spirit stone. You need not worry about me reneging on my promise!"

Unable to produce the item, Brother Yu could only offer a promise.

"In other words... the Aerial Strike Amulet isn't in your possession?" Yet, instead of focusing on the promise, Zhang Xuan chose to bite firmly at the underlying meaning behind Brother Yu's statement.

"..." This time, Brother Yu really burst into tears.

'Can you stop mentioning the Aerial Strike Amulet?

'All I need you to do is to capture that fellow, I'll give you whatever you want afterward as long as you do it, so can you just stop talking about the Aerial Strike Amulet...'

"Brother Yu... That fellow is already gone..."

Just as Brother Yu was about to continue arguing, he suddenly heard Senior Feng's despairing words. Hurriedly lifting his gaze, he realized that the Transcendent Mortal 7-dan spirit beast had already vanished in the dark sky.

If not for this incident, they might still have been able to find that aerial spirit beast in Leiyuan Peak. However, after this matter, why would that aerial spirit beast dare to remain here knowing that someone was after its life? It would definitely fly as far as it could!

"Damn it..."

The more he thought about it, the more furious he felt. Brother

Yu struggled to his feet and glared at Zhang Xuan in animosity.

At that moment, one of the seniors suddenly exclaimed, "Alright, time's up!"

Everyone subconsciously glanced at the incense on the stone pedestal, only to see the final whiff of smoke dissipating from the incense. Ten minutes had passed.

Brother Yu clenched his jaws and said, "Seniors, he's failed to capture a spirit beast, so his score is still lower than mine. This should mean that he has lost the bet..."

'Since you're going to be difficult, don't blame me for returning the favor!'

"Lost?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "My tamed beast captured a Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beast and brought it here, and if not for this fellow's intervention, I would have surely procured its inner core and earned another thousand points. It is clear that he intentionally let my spirit beast loose, even trying to convince me to flout the rules so as to have me disqualified from the examination! Most important of all, he made a bet with me despite not possessing the required capital. All of this suggests that he is trying to scam me of my high-tier spirit stone..."

Zhang Xuan stepped forward, and with an indignant expression, he said, "I beseech the seniors to redress my grievances!"

"This..."

Hearing the both sides of the story, the seniors gazed at one another and fell into a dilemma.

It was true that Zhang shi would have surely won if Yu Cheng hadn't interfered. In this respect, Zhang shi had the moral high ground.

However... whatever the cause was, it was a fact that Zhang shi's

score was lower than the other party. If they were to just look at the outcome, without a doubt, Zhang Shi had lost the bet.

A moment later, one of the seniors spoke up.

"Both of you are talented students of our Master Teacher Academy, there is no need to for the two of you to become enemies over such a minor matter. Why don't we just call the bet off..."

Yu Cheng harrumphed.

"No way! Since he dared to accept the challenge, he should have been prepared to face the consequences. It is clear that he has lost the bet, so he should pay me a high-tier spirit stone!"

Since he was unable to exact vengeance on the aerial spirit beast, he would just have to vent his frustrations on Zhang Xuan.

Otherwise, the matter that had happened would just turn him into a laughingstock, creating a dark stain in his history.

"This..."

Hearing those words from Brother Yu, the seniors contemplated for a moment longer before one eventually stood out and said, "Alright. Since that's the case, why don't we leave this matter to Elder Mo to resolve..."

Considering the astounding strength the both of them had displayed even before their enrollment, they would surely become new stars of the academy. Even as their seniors, they dared not offend them.

"Alright!" Yu Cheng replied smugly.

It was a fact that his score was higher than Zhang Xuan's, not even Elder Mo could twist this fact.

"Tell me your names, and I'll record your results first," the senior said.

"I am Yu Cheng, and he is Zhang Xuan..." Yu Cheng said. However, before he could finish his words, the seniors who were

still calm a moment ago suddenly widened their eyes in shock. Staring at the young man before them, their lips quivered in agitation, as if excited to see their favorite idol.

"Zhang Xuan? You are... Zhang shi from Huanyu Empire?"

Chapter 722 Forty Thousand Points

"Indeed, I am Zhang Xuan!"

Zhang Xuan scratched his head bewilderedly, uncomprehending of the reactions of the seniors.

'I am already being very low profile, choosing not to take out the Byzantium Helios Beast. Why are you all still acting like that?

'Besides, my points are lower than Yu Cheng's as well. Surely your agitation should be directed toward him instead of me?'

Not only was Zhang Xuan stunned, the other master teachers in the area were also surprised to see such reactions from the composed seniors. Did all of them suffer a stroke simultaneously?

Suddenly, one of the older seniors exclaimed, "Everyone, he is Zhang shi!", catching the attention of all of the other seniors.

"What? He is Zhang shi?"

"So it's you, you are as dashing as I thought..."

"Zhang shi, I am Liu Chuang from Grade 2, pleased to meet you. If you find yourself facing any trouble in the academy, feel free to look for me..."

"I am Zhi Zhijun from Grade 2, a member of the Enforcement Squad in the academy. Are you free tonight? Our team would like to host a welcome party to celebrate your enrollment..."

"Hah, is a welcome party all you can offer? Zhang shi, I know that you are a beast tamer, so I have prepared 2000 Beast Crystals for you. You need not feel any pressure accepting these, just regard it as a gift from a brother..."

"Beast Crystals? What a shabby gift to offer to another. Zhang shi, I have prepared a Beast Blood Pill for you..."

...

Hearing the exclamation, the invigilating seniors immediately tossed aside their jobs and rushed up to Zhang Xuan. They gazed at Zhang Xuan intimately as if he were their kin, and their eyes were shining so brightly in excitement that they could nearly light up the night.

"This..."

Not expecting the other seniors to treat him in such an amiable fashion right after hearing his name, Zhang Xuan rubbed his nose awkwardly. He couldn't comprehend the sight before him... Could it be that the news of him beating up the Byzantium Helios Beast had become known?

But that shouldn't be!

He had instructed Vicious to ensure that no one was around when he pummeled the Byzantium Helios Beast, so it should be impossible for anyone to have noticed that matter.

Not even Elder Mo would be able to get past Vicious' radar!

But if the news hadn't been leaked, what kind of insanity were these people up to?

Zhang Xuan hadn't killed a single high-tier spirit beast or display outstanding prowess throughout the examination... Could he be so brilliant that not even his humble performance could conceal his radiance any longer?

Upon thinking of this, Zhang Xuan subconsciously glanced down at his appearance—a normal master teacher robe... Un, it didn't seem that there was anything unique about him. His aura... had also been suppressed to Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle. As for his Heaven's Path zhenqi, they shouldn't be able to sense it either...

While Zhang Xuan was baffled by the situation before him, Yu Cheng was on the verge of going insane.

'I am clearly the winner, alright?

'I won the bet, accumulating a score of more than two thousand points, displaying an extraordinary performance in contrast to my peers... Yet, instead of speaking to me, you actually chose to show care and concern to a loser instead, inviting him to a meal and even gifting him valuable items...

'Do you need to be so obvious that you are fawning on someone?

'Where is your pride as seniors!'

Yu Cheng's lips twitched violently, and his eyes reddened in frenzy... 'The heck! I am the freaking winner here, I really am! It isn't this Zhang shi over here!'

On the other hand, Senior Feng also swallowed his saliva upon seeing the situation before him. The insanity that was unfolding before him had left him on the verge of madness.

He thought that he would be able to wash away his previous humiliations with this triumph, but who knew that the other party would still up him one in the end!

In the end, it seemed like nothing had changed at all.

"What is going on? What are you doing gathering here instead of invigilating the test properly?"

Just as everyone was feeling faint from the madness before them, a sharp bellow suddenly echoed in the air. Following which, a stern-looking middle-aged man walked over.

"It is Bai shi from the academy's Enforcement Hall! He is known throughout the academy to be an austere person..."

"I heard that Bai shi is Elder Mo's direct disciple. Even though he is a 6-star low-tier master teacher, he possesses a great deal of influence in the academy!"

"Direct disciple? You must be mistaken. Up until now, Elder Mo has been known to have never accepted a single direct disciple. Bai shi is simply an ordinary student under him..."

"Regardless of whether he is a direct disciple or not, he is still a figure that we can only look up to...."

...

Such soft whispers could be heard amidst the crowd.

Bai shi's cultivation and master teacher rank couldn't be considered to be exceptional, but he was extremely famous in the academy. As he had always followed behind Elder Mo, most had thought of him to be the latter's direct disciple.

"Bai shi!"

As expected, as soon as the seniors noticed Bai shi's arrival, they immediately dashed back to their positions at the speed of light.

"The reason teacher has made you the invigilators of this examination is due to his high opinion of your diligence and honesty. Who allowed you to approach the examinees on your own whim to strike up private connections with them here?" Bai shi glared at the seniors coldly.

The powerful aura of a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan weighed down heavily on them.

5-star master teacher corresponded to cultivation realms of Transcendent Mortal 6-dan, 7-dan, and 8-dan. To become a 6-star master teacher, one had to at least possess the cultivation of a 9-dan!

As a 6-star low-tier master teacher, Bai shi was a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan pinnacle expert. There were none that stood here who could match him.

"Yes..."

Those words left the faces of the seniors turning red in embarrassment.

"What are you waiting for? Hurry up and continue with the invigilation!"

Bai shi waved his hand majestically.

The frightened seniors hurriedly turned their attention back to tabulating the scores of the examinees.

"Humph!"

Bai shi harrumphed coldly. After ensuring that everything was back in order, he turned to Zhang Xuan. Unlike the previous austerity he had shown to the seniors, he had a slight smile on his face at the moment. Claspng his fist, he bowed. "Senior Zhang, teacher has invited you to meet him!"

"Senior?"

"Bai shi has addressed Zhang shi as... senior? Could it be that Elder Mo intends to take Zhang shi in as his direct disciple?"

"That would explain why all of the seniors are eager to fawn over him. After all, Elder Mo is one of the Ten Great Elders of the academy! The standing of his students is above that of most teachers. Just look at Bai shi, there is barely anyone who would dare stand in his way!"

"Indeed. To be accepted as the direct disciple despite having yet to officially enroll in the academy... How enviable!"

...

Seeing the politeness Bai shi was showing to Zhang shi, everyone suddenly froze.

For one to be addressed in such a manner by a 6-star master teacher, there was only one possibility—Elder Mo was intending to take in Zhang Xuan as his direct disciple!

But... hadn't Zhang shi just arrived at the academy, just like them?

All they had done to date was take the entrance examination. What in the world did the other party do to actually catch the eye of Elder Mo, who had never accepted a single direct disciple

before?

Wasn't he way too lucky!

"Elder Mo? Alright."

Noticing all of the gazes on him, Zhang Xuan realized that his plan to maintain a low profile had fallen through. With a deep sigh, he nodded and followed Bai shi down the mountain.

A moment later, they disappeared from the crowd's sight.

"Why?! I am obviously the victor! I am the one who won! But why..."

Seeing Zhang Xuan leave under the escort of Bai shi, Yu Cheng's eyes reddened in frenzy.

The reason he intentionally challenged Zhang Xuan was so as to force himself to perform spectacularly.

Even with his inner cores stolen, he still managed to obtain an amazing score exceeding two thousand points.

Given his outstanding result, why did Elder Mo choose to take in a person who had lost to him instead?

Seeing how Yu shi was raging over the matter, a senior finally couldn't stand watching the situation any longer. With a look of pity, the senior asked, "You won? Yu shi, do you know what Zhang shi's score is?"

Stunned by the abrupt question, Yu Cheng replied, "His score? Wasn't it tabulated at 2580 just now?"

It was just a moment ago that the score had been revealed, and the other party had lost to him and Senior Feng by 78 points. Did the senior forget about it?

"2580?" The senior burst into laughter. Shaking his head, he said, "Do you think that it is possible to catch Elder Mo's eye with such a score?"

"This..." Yu Cheng blinked in shock.

Zhang Xuan had come together with him to have their scores checked. Could there be some mistake with his score? But how could that be possible?

"Let me tell you honestly, his total score adds up to... 43724 points!" The senior spoke affirmatively, but a hint of astonishment still flashed across his eyes while reciting the figure.

"43000 points? B-but how is this possible?"

The astonished Yu Cheng nearly fainted on the spot. His lips twitched intensely in disbelief. "Didn't he only obtain the inner cores from Luoyang Beast, Viridsmoke Beast, Seven Feeler Beast... How did he obtain such a high score?"

Yu Cheng wasn't the only one astounded by this revelation. The master teachers in the surroundings also turned their doubtful gazes over.

They had all witnessed the sight of Zhang shi handing over his inner cores, as well as the tabulation of the results. How in the world did two thousand points turn into forty thousand points?

Wasn't this gap a little too big?

Forty thousand points... Given the score of a hundred points for each Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage spirit beast, one would have to hunt at least 400 of them to achieve that score!

But with the time limit of a single day, was that even possible?

"How is that possible? Zhang shi singlehandedly saved more than two hundred trapped master teachers at Heaven's Thread. In the midst of doing so, he tamed more than four hundred Consonant Spirit realm and Cosmos Bridge realm spirit beasts. How is that not worth forty thousand points?"

Seeing Yu Cheng's disbelief, the senior flung his sleeves and said, "Furthermore, you should also be aware that taming a spirit beast

is far more difficult than killing one!"

"He tamed... four hundred spirit beasts?"

Hearing those words, someone suddenly put two and two together and exclaimed, "This... Could it be that Zhang shi is the unparalleled genius that returned at noon whom the seniors were talking about?"

They had previously heard from the seniors that a top scorer had already emerged at noon. Initially, most thought that it would only be two to three thousand points at the maximum, but who could have imagined that it would actually be forty thousand points!

Furthermore, it came actually from this humble-looking Zhang shi!

"Indeed, that person is Zhang shi... After learning of his incredible performance, even Elder Mo and Pavilion Master Mo Gaoyuan are eager to meet him. Do you really think that you have won against him with those measly two thousand points of yours?" the senior said.

How conceited!

Initially, even though Brother Yu and Senior Feng had addressed Zhang Xuan as Zhang shi, they still weren't able to put the two together. After all, there were at least hundreds of master teachers amongst the examinees that went by the surname of Zhang as well.

But for a person to be known as Zhang Xuan and to have come from Huanyu Empire at that, there seemed to only be a single person who fit this description!

The incredible genius whom even Elder Mo was full of praise for!

Honestly speaking, he still found it hard to believe the incident that had happened at noon to be true.

If Zhang shi was only strong and formidable in beast taming, they wouldn't have been so impressed.

More importantly, he was humble and nonchalant to fame and wealth. That was what had truly left them awed.

Most likely, it was this charisma of his that won him the respect of all of the examinees who returned at noon.

Two hundred master teachers bringing more than four hundred spirit beasts back, but every single one of them only asked for a single point. They insisted on transferring the remaining to Zhang shi to thank him for saving their lives. Just by recalling the sight of it now, he would still shake in agitation at the grandness of the sight.

After which, when he heard of the entire story from the master teachers, his respect for Zhang Xuan only further deepened.

Despite taming so many spirit beasts and saving everyone, he didn't boast and demand compensation and credit for his efforts.

After the deed was done, he simply flung his sleeves and left nonchalantly, not even bothering to leave his name behind. Such was his nobility! Simply too few master teachers had managed to achieve such a transcendental attitude in their lifetimes.

Chapter 723 Elder Mo Accepting a Disciple

Most important of all...

According to what he heard from the other master teachers, in order to save them, Zhang shi had utilized a secret art to forcefully raise his cultivation from Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage to Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle!

If it had been anyone else in his place, that person would have surely gone around showing off his prowess. On the other hand, Zhang shi had chosen to remain humble about the matter...

If not for Yu Cheng exposing his name, no one would have recognized him!

It was truly a pity that most master teachers get too caught up with cultivating their strength that they neglected to cultivate their spirituality.

Look at yourself... Are you certain that you are qualified to compete with him?

What do you have that can possibly compete with him?

Your boastful mouth?

With such a thought in mind, the seniors glanced at Yu Cheng derisively.

If it had been in the past, they would surely have been awed by Yu Cheng's astounding result of two thousand points. But when put against Zhang shi, the disparity was simply too big that it was almost disappointing.

And this wasn't just an issue concerning strength, but moral values as well.

Zhang shi was willing to sacrifice himself for the other master teachers while expecting nothing in return, what about you?

In fear of loss, you intentionally chased away the spirit beast that

the other party's tamed beast had captured over. After such a shameless act, you even dared to show off your points and force the other party to fulfill the end of the bet...

The both of you are geniuses, but why is there simply such a huge gap between you two?

"..."

Under the derisive gazes of the seniors, Yu Cheng felt his legs losing his strength. He quickly turned around to look at the others, only to find countless more derisive gazes before him.

Unable to take the blow, Yu Cheng's vision darkened, and a spurt of fresh blood gushed from his mouth.

The heck... Isn't this just a bet?

In this examination, I was stripped bare by a spirit beast and lost all of my artifacts. Despite my hard work and outstanding performance, I still ended up being the object of mockery of everyone else... What the hell is this!

Brother Yu and Senior Feng glanced at one another, and they burst into tears.

...

"That... Bai shi, may I know the reason why Elder Mo is looking for me?"

Until this point, Zhang shi was still stunned by the sudden twist of events before him. He simply couldn't figure out what was going on.

He had been too caught up with pursuing the Myriad Anthive Queen that he neglected the spirit beasts that he had tamed. As such, he was also unaware that the master teachers he had saved had put the points obtained from those spirit beasts under his name.

As a result, he still thought that his score was lower than Yu

Cheng's.

"You don't know?"

Hearing Zhang Xuan's question, Bai shi was taken aback. He turned around to look at Zhang Xuan, and upon seeing the earnest confusion in the other party's face, his respect for the other party deepened further.

Did you see that?

This is the magnanimity of a true master!

Under normal circumstances, it would be a blessing if one didn't solicit for a reward after doing a kind deed. On the other hand, Zhang shi threw it completely to the back of his mind, treating it as if it was the natural thing to do. Such nobility was truly worthy of respect!

Of everyone that he had seen, the only one who could possibly compare with the other party was the old principal.

"Am I supposed to know?"

Zhang Xuan asked in bewilderment.

He had only met Elder Mo once, and that was during the briefing of the examination. On top of that, he also didn't think that he had done anything worthy of the other party's attention. So what could the other party be seeking him for?

"Don't worry, you aren't in any trouble. You will know once we get there!"

With a slight smile, Bai shi replied.

After walking for some distance, a straw hut came into sight.

While it was termed as a straw hut, it actually resembled more of a gazebo. It seemed to be freshly built, and beneath its roof sat two elders.

"Pavilion Master Mo?"

With a glance, Zhang Xuan swiftly recognized the two men in the gazebo. One of them was Elder Mo while the other party was Pavilion Master Mo, the person who left a high-tier spirit stone as a reward for the Master Teacher Tournament, Mo Gaoyuan.

"Teacher, Zhang shi is here!"

Unaware of the doubts flying through Zhang Xuan's mind, Bai shi stepped forward and reported.

"Oh? You are Zhang Xuan?"

Elder Mo stood up and assessed Zhang Xuan from head to toe. He slowly nodded, seemingly satisfied with what he was seeing.

A composed young man with no signs of anxiety or arrogance. It was clear that he was a highly cultured man.

"Zhang Xuan pays respect to Elder Mo and Pavilion Master Mo!" Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

"Oh? Zhang shi, this seems to be the first time we are meeting." Mo Gaoyuan gazed at Zhang Xuan doubtfully.

"Ah... Indeed!"

Only then did Zhang Xuan suddenly recall that he had only met Pavilion Master Mo in his identity as 'Yang shi'. In strict terms, this should be the first time 'Zhang shi' was meeting with him.

"I have heard of Pavilion Master Mo's valiance from Hong shi."

Zhang Xuan replied calmly without the slightest hint of panic.

"Not bad. To be able to recognize me from just descriptions, as expected of a genius!" Mo Gaoyuan nodded.

He did possess a fair share of fame as the pavilion master of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Pavilion, so it wasn't too surprising for Zhang Xuan to recognize him.

"Oh? What does this mean? Pavilion Master Mo, you are acquainted with him?" Hearing the conversation between the two,

Elder Mo asked doubtfully.

Wasn't Zhang shi a freshman who had just enrolled this year?

Why did it seem as if he had some ties with Pavilion Master Mo?

"We aren't acquaintances, but I have heard of Zhang shi's name. As you can see, this is the first time we are meeting." Mo Gaoyuan replied.

Without the other party's permission, he didn't dare to speak of Yang shi's name in public. Thus, he chose to speak of the matter vaguely.

"You heard of Zhang shi's name?" Elder Mo's bewilderment further deepened.

Who was the man before him? A 6-star pinnacle master teacher, a person who ruled over the Master Teacher Pavilion of a Tier 1 Empire, one of the most influential men in Hongyuan Empire. On the other hand, no matter how talented Zhang shi was, he was still nothing more than a humble figure from Huanyu Empire. How could there be ties between two people from vastly different worlds, not to mention, Pavilion Master Mo had actually heard of Zhang shi?

"Pavilion Master Mo has probably heard of me due to his ties with my teacher." Seeing that Pavilion Master Mo was put at a spot, Zhang Xuan stood forward to explain.

"Ties with your teacher?" Elder Mo was taken aback. "May I know whom your esteemed teacher is? Perhaps I might be acquainted with him."

In truth, Zhang Xuan's feat of taming more than four hundred spirit beasts in just two hours had stoked his desire to take him in as his direct disciple.

In his view, since Zhang Xuan had originated from the humble Huanyu Empire, his teacher was unlikely to be an incredible figure. As such, it shouldn't be a problem for him to take the other

party in as his direct disciple. However, when he heard that Mo Gaoyuan knew of the other party's teacher, and there seemed to be some deep relationship between them at that, he began to feel a little uneasy.

If Zhang Xuan's teacher was a 6-star master teacher as well, it would be inappropriate for him to take the other party's student. While it was typically considered as an honor for one's student to catch the eye of a higher ranked master teacher, the same didn't apply for peers.

This was especially so if Zhang Xuan was a direct disciple. This would then become an extremely sensitive matter that concerned one's heritage and reputation. Taking how Cao Xiong had tried to take Wang Ying away from Zhang Xuan back then as an example, such incidents could be viewed as an attempt to humiliate the teacher as the teacher's professionalism would be questioned, thus potentially resulting in an irreconcilable animosity between both parties.

"My teacher is Yang Xuan!" Zhang Xuan replied.

"Yang Xuan?"

Elder Mo frowned. After a moment of contemplation, he realized that he had never heard of this name so he turned to Mo Gaoyuan and asked, "May I know if Yang shi is..."

"This..."

Having promised to keep Yang shi's identity a secret, Mo Gaoyuan was put at a spot.

"My teacher enjoys spending his time roaming the lands, so he doesn't have much of a fame. It is normal for Elder Mo to have not heard of him." Zhang Xuan hurriedly replied.

"Doesn't have much of a fame?" Elder Mo was perplexed.

As the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion, Mo Gaoyuan possessed exceptional standing. If Zhang Xuan's teacher was just

an ordinary master teacher, why would he hesitate to talk about him?

"I'll just tell you the truth then. I am indebted to Yang shi for his impartation..." Judging from Elder Mo's expression that he was unlikely to give up, Mo Gaoyuan was fearful that his old friend might accidentally say something inappropriate before Yang shi's student, so he hurriedly said.

"Impartation? Could it be..."

Upon realizing the meaning behind Mo Gaoyuan's words, Elder Mo hurriedly turned his gaze to the young man before him.

Among master teachers of equal rank, one would usually use terms like trading insights and interacting. Only toward higher ranked master teachers would the term impartation be used.

For Mo Gaoyuan to act so cautiously and use such a respectful term, could it be that... Zhang Xuan's teacher was a master teacher of higher rank than him?

But both Mo Gaoyuan and he were already 6-star pinnacle master teachers... If Zhang Xuan's teacher was beyond Mo Gaoyuan, didn't that mean that he was a 7-star master teacher or beyond?

"That's right!" Knowing what Elder Mo was thinking, Mo Gaoyuan hurriedly nodded.

"This..." Elder Mo's face paled in shock.

He was only a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, how could he possibly dare to take in the student of a 7-star master teacher? That would be getting ahead of himself!

"May I know if Zhang shi's beast taming skill was imparted by Yang shi?"

But nevertheless, Elder Mo still felt a little reluctant to give up on such a good bud.

After all, a student could have multiple teachers for differing

fields. There could be a teacher to guide him on his cultivation, another on beast taming, painting, Way of Medicine... If Zhang Xuan's beast taming skills didn't come from Yang shi, it wouldn't be considered a breach of etiquette for Elder Mo to take him as his beast taming student.

In a sense, this was similar to how Zhang Xuan took Luo Qiqi in as his apothecary student.

As the saying goes, "learn from the skilled, not the aged". Even if Yang Xuan was a 7-star master teacher, as long as he didn't teach Zhang Xuan beast taming, there would be no clash of interest.

"My beast taming skill was indeed learned from my teacher."

Zhang Xuan could also tell Elder Mo's intention, so he quickly admitted to it.

Elder Mo would be a strong backing for him in the Master Teacher Academy, especially considering the fact that he was one of the Ten Great Elders, but Zhang Xuan was still reluctant to acknowledge the other party as his teacher.

First, it would be difficult for him to explain the matter of 'Yang shi'.

All along, Yang shi had put on too invincible of a front before others. It might bring some doubt to the credibility of Yang shi's identity if he were to acknowledge Elder Mo as his teacher, regardless of whether there was a clash of conflict or not.

Second, he didn't even accept Kong shi's offer to become his student. If he were to become Elder Mo's student now, wouldn't Kong shi explode from rage?

Even though it was known throughout the continent that Kong shi had already passed away, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but think that there was something deeper to the matter after the 'disciple accepting incident' back then.

Besides, he was a Celestial Master Teacher, a being recognized by

even the heavens itself. Even if he wanted to acknowledge the other party as his teacher, would the other party be able to bear such the heavy burden of being the teacher of a Celestial Master Teacher on his shoulder?

"Then... what about smithing? I am skilled at smithing too!" Elder Mo was still reluctant to give up. After all, it wasn't every day that one would see such a talented student.

Everyone knew of Elder Mo's astounding beast taming capability, but little knew that he was also a top-notch blacksmith as well.

"My smithing art is also imparted by my teacher." Zhang Xuan replied.

"T-then... what about Way of Medicine?" Elder Mo pushed on obstinately

"Cough cough, alright, that's enough. Yang shi is a great man, his capability isn't one that we can fathom..."

Seeing how his old friend was still trying his luck, pushing from beast taming to smithing and finally to Way of Medicine, Mo Gaoyuan couldn't help but interject.

"Sigh, you also know that the reason why I am still without a direct disciple isn't because I am unwilling to accept one but that I am simply unable to find a suitable candidate..."

Knowing that Pavilion Master Mo was stopping him out of goodwill, Elder Mo shook his head with a bitter smile.

In truth, he had seen many geniuses in his years, but none of them had reached his expectations.

His prerequisite in accepting a disciple wasn't the talent of the other party's talent but his personality. He deeply believed that a master teacher had to be willing to bear the weight of the entire world on his shoulders.

Given that Zhang Xuan was willing to sacrifice himself to trigger

a secret art to forcefully raise his cultivation to save others and yet not solicit any compensation, his personality definitely reached Elder Mo's expectations.

The reason why he spent such a heavy price on recruiting the services of the Byzantium Helios Beast to invigilate the examination was just so that he could find a suitable student to inherit his heritage. With a perfect jade right before him, how could he be willing to let go?

"I understand your intentions, but..."

At this point, Mo Gaoyuan hesitated for a moment before continuing, "Yang shi's prowess..."

Just as he was conflicted as to whether he should reveal the true strength of Yang shi to make his good buddy give up on the impossible idea, one of the invigilating seniors suddenly rushed to the gazebo from the distance.

"Reporting to Elder Mo, we have finished tabulating the score of the examinees!"

"Good!"

Elder Mo's eyes lit up. "How many people have passed the examination?"

"Reporting to Elder Mo, a total of 6487!"

"O-only six thousand?" Elder Mo was startled.

Chapter 724 The Selfless Zhang Xuan

The typical practice was to have at least twenty thousand of the thirty thousand students to pass the examination. Yet, only six thousand or so people had passed the examination. Did this mean that they were going to eliminate a total of twenty-four thousand freshmen?

For the result of the examination to actually turn out like this, how was to account for this matter to the academy?

"That's right." The senior nodded, affirming Elder Mo's doubts.

Elder Mo's complexion turned incredibly awful.

Didn't the Byzantium Helios Beast promise him to ensure that at least twenty thousand freshmen would clear the examination? Why did the standards suddenly turned out so strict that only six thousand passed the examination?

That fellow had always been a dependable and reliable person. What in the world happened this time around?

Hearing the figures, Zhang Xuan was also taken aback. He thought that the pass ratio would at least still be fifty percent, but from the looks of it now, he was being too optimistic.

"That darned Byzantium Helios Beast is to blame for this. I shall teach him a severe lesson when I return!"

A glint flashed across Zhang Xuan's eyes.

If not for that spy of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe interfering with the examination, how could the pass ratio be so low?

The Master Teacher Academy might not mean anything much to him, but to the other master teachers, it spelled their future. As long as they could get in and persevere on, they would be destined for greatness. However, after the mess that the Byzantium Helios Beast had cooked up, they could only end up departing in

disappointment.

Just as Zhang Xuan was contemplating how he should deal with that darned saint beast, Elder Mo anxiously clasped his fist and said, "I need to deal with some matters now, I'll be right back!"

Leaving behind those words, he turned around and soared into the air, headed in the direction of the pinnacle of Leiyuan Peak.

No matter what, he had to ask what the Byzantium Helios Beast was up to, failing so many examinees.

Pushing his Saint 1-dan pinnacle cultivation to the limits, he swiftly reached the top of the peak.

"Senior Byzantium Helios..."

Elder Mo shouted as he approached the gigantic straw cottage in the distance.

The Byzantium Helios Beast was the tamed beast of the old principal, thus making its standing higher than even the Ten Great Master Teachers. As such, he had to respectfully address the other party as 'senior'.

Hearing that there was no response, Elder Mo flew closer to the straw cottage, and just as he was about to call for the other party again, his eyes suddenly narrowed.

He suddenly noticed multiple depressions on the originally flat snow land. Furthermore, the spiritual energy in the surroundings seemed to be a little chaotic, as if a battle had just occurred here.

"This level of disturbance in the spiritual energy can only be caused by a Saint realm expert!"

As a 6-star master teacher, Elder Mo possessed an incredible eye of discernment. He could tell in a single look that the mess before him was a result of a battle between Saint realm experts.

"Could it be that..."

Elder Mo's eyes narrowed, and clenching his fists, he rushed into

the straw cottage.

The Byzantium Helios Beast had always been lazy, and under normal circumstances, it would be resting inside the cottage. Yet, all that appeared before Elder Mo was emptiness. Could this mean that the Byzantium Helios Beast... was in danger?

"How in the world could it be? Who would dare to attack Senior Byzantium Helios of the Master Teacher Academy?"

A hint killing intent boiled in Elder Mo's eyes.

The Byzantium Helios Beast was the old principal's tamed beast, and he represented the dignity and reputation of the Master Teacher Academy. To dare to lay one's hands on it was no different from openly provoking the entire Master Teacher Academy, taunting the entire Master Teacher Pavilion!

Elder Mo swiftly headed out to study the marks left outside the cottage.

"Judging from the size and outline of these depressions, it should be left by Senior Byzantium Helios. As for these footsteps, they seem to be slightly larger than an ordinary human..."

Elder Mo swiftly walked up to one of the footprints and pinched the snow in the region. All of the sudden, his eyes narrowed.

"Killing intent? This... Otherworldly Demons!"

As a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, he possessed an in-depth knowledge of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. From the footprints before him, he could sense a slight killing intent which was distinctive of an Otherworldly Demonic Tribe expert!

"One, two, three..." More than twenty Saint realm Otherworldly Demons actually coordinated with one another to deal with Senior Byzantium Helios?"

After counting the footprints in the area and making a rough estimation, Elder Mo's eyes widened in shock.

It was no wonder why the Byzantium Helios Beast was missing! To think that twenty Saint realm Otherworldly Demons would actually appear here!

This was a land belonging to the Master Teacher Academy! How did the Otherworldly Demons sneak into here and capture the Byzantium Helios Beast away without their notice?

"This is truly a disaster. I must quickly report this to the academy and the Master Teacher Pavilion!"

The appearance of twenty Saint realm Otherworldly Demons was no joke. This concerned the stability of the entire Hongyuan Empire! They must investigate and deal with this matter swiftly, or else catastrophe could befall the Hongyuan City!

With this thought in mind, Elder Mo swiftly rushed down the mountain, and a short moment later, he returned back to the gazebo.

"What's wrong?"

Seeing his old buddy rushing back anxiously with an awful look on his face, Mo Gaoyuan asked worriedly.

"This..."

Glancing at Zhang Xuan, Elder Mo hesitated.

The emergence of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was a huge affair. If news were to leak out, it would cause a huge panic. Even though Elder Mo was one of the Ten Great Master Teachers, he didn't dare to take such a risk.

"Since the both of you have important matters to attend to, I won't impose myself then..."

Noticing the other party's hesitance, Zhang Xuan knew that his presence was unwanted, so he stood up and clasped his fist.

"Actually... it's fine!" Hearing that Zhang Xuan was going to leave, Elder Mo felt a little embarrassed instead.

It was just a moment ago which he was trying to persuade the other party to be his disciple, to regard him as an outsider and leave him out of important issues now would be truly inappropriate.

"This matter is of grave importance, but I have trust in Zhang shi's credibility, so it's fine for you to listen as well." After a moment of hesitation, Elder Mo spoke up, "I noticed the traces of Otherworldly Demons on Leiyuan Peak!"

"What? How strong are they?" Mo Gaoyuan widened his eyes in shock.

"Even at the very least, they are stronger at me. Furthermore, it seems like there are quite a few of them!"

Elder Mo revealed his analysis on the matter.

Even under the encirclement of more than twenty Saint realm experts, given Senior Byzantium Helios's prowess, he should at least be able to send a message to them. But when Elder Mo arrived earlier, he combed through the entire area but found nothing of that sort. This hinted at the presence of an expert exceeding Saint 1-dan among the enemy.

"Stronger than you?"

Mo Gaoyuan's complexion darkened.

At the same time, Zhang Xuan also narrowed his eyes.

All along, he had been suspecting that the Byzantium Helios Beast was a spy of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, and those words from Elder Mo only confirmed his doubts.

That fellow must be the tamed beast of a powerful Otherworldly Demon!

Otherwise, why would it obstinately refuse to reveal whom its master was?

"Indeed, I have saved a lot of master teachers!"

Having confirmed this matter, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

Had the scheme of the Byzantium Helios Beast and Otherworldly Demonic Tribe succeeded, this wouldn't be a matter of how many people failed the examination but how many people died in the examination.

This would be a huge blow to the Master Teacher Academy!

As a master teacher, Zhang Xuan carried the responsibility and mission belonging to one. If he were to encounter the scheme of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, he mustn't back down!

"I hope that the two of you won't spread this matter around. I'll assemble the Ten Great Elders and conduct a meeting to deal with this matter."

Elder Mo said.

Pavilion Master Mo and Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

Any matter involving the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe had to be kept in secrecy or else it could cause a pandemonium among the populace.

"Un, we will keep the matter to ourselves. Right, what about the matter regarding the intake this year?" Pavilion Master Mo asked.

"This..." Elder Mo rubbed his glabella in distress.

This matter was truly a tricky issue.

He thought that with the Byzantium Helios Beast overlooking the examination, there shouldn't be any problem in this matter. Who would have thought that the other party would end up being attacked by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe and go missing altogether, resulting in such a huge problem in the examination?

The internally agreed intake number was twenty thousand, but now only six thousand had managed to pass the examination. How was he to explain this matter to the Master Teacher Academy?

If he were to simply bring the other students in or conduct any examination, that would undermine the authority of the entrance examination, and this entire matter would become nothing more than a farce.

But accepting only six thousand out of thirty thousand geniuses was a huge loss to the Master Teacher Academy!

"Elder Mo, I have an idea in mind!" Zhang Xuan contemplated for a moment before speaking up.

"Feel free to speak." Elder Mo and Pavilion Master Mo turned their sights to Zhang Xuan, curious to see what he had to say.

"Didn't you say that it is possible to share the points one obtained?"

At which, Zhang Xuan smiled and proposed, "Since I have forty thousand points, there is more than enough to go around even if I were to give one to everyone. This way, everyone would be able to clear the examination!"

"This..."

Elder Mo was stunned, "But these are the points you obtained with great difficulty, how can I take them from you and allocate it to the other examinees..."

"It's nothing much. With the threat of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe is looming above us, we master teachers should buff up our forces as far as we could. By giving those geniuses from the various regions a chance, we are giving a hope to humanity as well."

Zhang Xuan waved his hands nonchalantly.

The points he had accumulated were useless to him anyway. Since that was the case, he might as well give them out to win the favor of others and build his reputation. This would be helpful for his advancement as a master teacher as well.

Even though most tended to overlook it, reputation was also a

factor that master teachers required. Without a strong reputation, how could master teachers rally the forces of humanity and lead the fight against the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe? As such, it was also taken into account when determining the Master Teacher Pavilion determined the qualification of a master teacher in advancing to the higher rank.

"This... Alright. Since you have made up your mind, I will thank you on behalf of the Master Teacher Academy. I'll inform all of the examinees of this matter now!"

Hearing Zhang Xuan's words, Elder Mo clasped his fist with a grave expression.

While others were still thinking about their own individual interest, the other party was already contemplating over the future of humanity and the Master Teacher Pavilion!

"If all master teachers could be as selfless as Zhang shi, what would there to fear of the Otherworldly Demons..."

Elder Mo thought, impressed with the young man before him.

If he had only regarded Zhang Xuan as a junior before, he was viewing the other party as a fellow peer at this instant.

How big-hearted must one be to willingly forgo his achievements for others!

As expected of Yang shi's direct disciple, his capability and mindset were vastly different from the others!

"I'll be troubling Elder Mo then."

Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

"No, it's no trouble at all. If anything, I am the one troubling you. If not for your generosity, I would have no idea how I could resolve this matter... I owe you one!"

Elder Mo replied.

Should this examination only have an intake of six thousand, he

would become a huge joke of the Master Teacher Academy.

His prestige and dignity as one of the Ten Great Elders would also be shattered.

While the other party had offered a ray of hope to salvage the future of the other twenty-four thousand master teachers outside, the other party had also salvaged his reputation.

"This..."

Zhang Xuan scratched his head awkwardly.

Actually... Rather than having you owe me a favor, I would very much rather receive a few high-tier spirit stones from you...

"You need not feel troubled over this, you have indeed helped Elder Mo a lot this time. Besides, Elder Mo's favor doesn't come easily. Even I haven't received it from him in the past two hundred years of our relationship!"

Seeing the reluctance on Zhang Xuan's face, Mo Gaoyuan urged him to accept it.

As one of the Ten Great Elders, Elder Mo was an upright and austere man. He had high expectations of himself and others, which resulted in him being the only elder without a direct disciple to date.

It wasn't easy to receive a favor from a man like that.

"Thank you, Elder Mo!" After such words from Pavilion Master Mo, Zhang Xuan could only nod in agreement.

If others were to learn that he wasn't interested in accepting Elder Mo's favor, preferring high-tier spirit stones over that, they would definitely send him flying to the stars with a kick.

Which of the Ten Great Elders wasn't an influential figure in Hongyuan Empire?

The favor of a person as powerful as them was worth much more than gold.

If one could trade this favor with the Hongyuan Empire's royal family for high-tier spirit stone, one would receive at least several dozens of them!

This was how great the value of a favor from one of the Ten Great Elders was worth!

Such a valuable thing, and yet you are still reluctant to accept it... Why don't you just kick the bucket!

Chapter 725 Giving Out Points

"Pavilion Master Mo, please wait here for a moment. Allow me to organize the freshmen first before assembling the Ten Great Elders for a conference," Elder Mo said before turning around to exit, leaving Mo Gaoyuan and Zhang Xuan in the gazebo.

After a moment of silence, Mo Gaoyuan suddenly asked, "Zhang shi, may I ask if... Yang shi is here as well?"

The reason he had put a high-tier spirit stone up as a reward for the tournament and had come over here to meet Zhang Xuan was to strike up a relationship with Yang shi.

"My teacher has always been a carefree person who hates to be restrained, so I am unsure of his whereabouts as well," Zhang Xuan replied casually. "I heard from my teacher that you met with some trouble trying to open the Zhukong acupoint. May I know if the problem has been resolved already?"

"Speaking of this, I really have to thank Yang shi for his guidance!"

At this point, Mo Gaoyuan clasped his fist politely.

If not for Yang shi's guidance, he might have ended up straying further and further from the right path, and perhaps, it might even have become impossible for him to ever reach Saint 2-dan in his life. Now that he had healed his internal wounds, a breakthrough was already within sights.

This incident served to further emphasize how fearsome Yang shi was.

With just a casual glance, the other party had been able to determine the cause of his problem and come up with a solution which would not only resolve the problem but further his cultivation as well.

Even if he could clone himself ten times over, he would still be no

match for the other party.

In his eyes, the Ten Great Master Teachers of Hongyuan Academy were probably not much different from children playing house.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony. Teacher has always been a person who follows his whims. Since he has offered to help you, it only goes to show that the both of you are fated. Thus, there's no need for you to think too much about it!" Zhang Xuan chuckled.

"I see!" Mo Gaoyuan nodded in response.

There were indeed some high-ranked master teachers who based their decisions off fate after having comprehended the essence of the world. If fate didn't allow for it, they would never offer their guidance to another.

It was also because of fate that Yang shi offered his guidance to Mo Gaoyuan, and he had never expected anything in return.

Besides, even if Mo Gaoyuan intended to return the favor, he had to have something that could interest the other party in the first place...

At that moment, Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled another matter and asked, "Right, since Elder Mo is a 6-star pinnacle beast tamer, why don't I see his tamed beast anywhere? May I ask, what saint beast is he contracted to?"

Even though he was certain that the Byzantium Helios Beast was a spy of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, there were still several doubts he had in his mind.

Firstly, considering the proximity between Leiyuan Peak and the Master Teacher Academy, it was doubtful that such a powerful saint beast could reside on the mountain without catching the attention of the master teachers in the academy.

"It's Inferno Dragon Saint Beast!" Even though Mo Gaoyuan was unsure of the purpose behind Zhang Xuan's words, he still chose to

answer his query without any hesitation.

"Inferno Dragon Saint Beast?"

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He had never heard of such a saint beast before, but it should be fine as long as it wasn't the Byzantium Helios Beast.

"Indeed. That tamed beast of his... Sigh, it's truly an unfortunate event!" Upon speaking of the Inferno Dragon Saint Beast, Mo Gaoyuan hesitated for a moment before shaking his head in pity.

"What's wrong?" Zhang Xuan was bewildered by Mo Gaoyuan's reaction.

"Based on what I know, it seems that the Inferno Dragon Saint Beast... doesn't have long to live." Mo Gaoyuan sighed.

"Doesn't have long to live?" Zhang Xuan was left even more puzzled by the other party's words.

Typically speaking, saint beasts possessed a far greater longevity than humans. As such, it was extremely rare for a beast tamer to outlive their tamed beasts.

"Yes. It appears that the Inferno Dragon Saint Beast has met with some trouble in its cultivation... Forget it, let's not talk about such a depressing topic!"

Halfway through his words, Mo Gaoyuan shook his head, deciding to speak no further.

Even though the Inferno Dragon Saint Beast's fiery temperament made it unsuited to serve as the invigilator for the examination, the least it could do was show its support by attending, especially considering how important the entrance examination was.

Thinking that the situation was peculiar, he had asked Elder Mo regarding the matter just a moment ago, and only then did he learn about the problem plaguing the Inferno Dragon Saint Beast.

"Alright."

Seeing how Mo Gaoyuan was unwilling to speak any further on the matter, Zhang Xuan chose not to ask as well.

...

Hu Qing was a 4-star pinnacle master teacher from Qingyuan Tier-2 Empire. His cultivation had only reached Clarifying Turbidity realm advanced stage, still a way off from reaching pinnacle.

He had come from a remote location, and he had to give up on a lot of things before he could pass the examination to come here.

In the final round of the Master Teacher Tournament, in order to get into the top ten, he had to fight frenziedly without care of his life, sustaining seventeen grievous wounds before he could defeat his opponent.

The reason he was so desperate was because he was different from the others.

The other master teachers could still return to their local Master Teacher Pavilion to enjoy the highest of privileges if they were unable to qualify for the Master Teacher Academy, but such an option didn't exist for him!

Born with a deadly affliction, there was only a single medicinal herb which could save his life. However, this herb was incredibly valuable and the only way he could obtain it was through enrolling into the Master Teacher Academy and purchasing it with academic credits.

He'd thought that as long as he was willing to put his life on the line, he would be able to pass the entrance examination no matter how difficult it was... Who knew that in the end, despite how hard he tried, he still failed the examination!

He'd attempted to hunt down spirit beasts to procure their inner core, but he had ended up being surrounded by them instead, and he'd nearly lost his life in that encounter. It had taken him

tremendous effort to escape from the encirclement, but even so, he'd ended up suffering grievous wounds for it. Eventually, the examination finished without him obtaining a single inner core.

Without a single point to his name, he would be unable to become a member of the academy.

Unable to obtain the medicinal herb required to cure his affliction, it would just be a matter of time before his illness was triggered, resulting in his death.

"No, I must enroll in the Master Teacher Academy by hook or by crook..."

Withstanding the immense pain from his wounds, he struggled to his feet and walked over to one of the celebrated geniuses in this examination—Yu Cheng.

He had watched the bet earlier, and he knew that the other party possessed more than two thousand points. As long as the other party was willing to give even a single point to him, he would be able to enroll in the academy, and there would still be hope for his affliction.

Clasping his fists and bowing deeply, Yu Qing pleaded earnestly, "Brother Yu... I am Yu Qing, a master teacher from Qingyuan Empire. As long as Brother Yu can give me a single point so that I can pass the examination, I am willing to spend the rest of my life serving you to repay your magnanimity..."

Even though it was a huge blow to his dignity as a master teacher, with his life at stake, he had no choice but to endure it!

"Give you a single point? Who do you think you are?"

Yu Cheng was already frustrated about losing to Zhang Xuan when this fellow suddenly came over to beg him for points. Displeased by the other party's actions, his face darkened.

All in all, he only had two thousand points. Even though he was unable to win Elder Mo's favor, he was still hoping that he could

catch the attention of other elders through this achievement. If he were to give this fellow a point, was he supposed to give one to everyone who came begging him for it?

The moment he created this precedent, it would only cause a whole string of trouble. Furthermore, none of these points had come easily. He'd had to work extremely hard for every last one of them, so he was reluctant to give them away as well.

"I..."

Humiliated, Hu Qing's face turned crimson. His head hung lowly by his chest, and he clenched his fists so tight that his knuckles were turning white. Taking a deep breath, he gritted his jaws in determination and kneeled onto the ground. "I beg Brother Yu to give me a single point to clear this examination. As long as you grant my request, I'll obey every single command you ask of me without the slightest hesitation in the future!"

"You are just a measly Transcendent Mortal 4-dan advanced stage weakling. Even if you were to become my servant, you would be no use to me at all. Scram! Otherwise, I'll kick you away myself!" Yu Cheng harrumphed furiously with a frown.

What the heck was this supposed to be?

If a Consonant Spirit realm expert had come to him with these words, he could still consider the matter. But a fellow who hadn't even reached Clarifying Turbidity realm pinnacle actually wanted to negotiate with him? How insolent!

He'd had to spend invaluable artifacts in order to earn his points, and he was even humiliated by a Transcendent Mortal 7-dan spirit beast for it.

Given how much he had gone through for them, how could he be willing to give his points away so easily?

Senior Feng stepped forward and said, "The fact that you weren't able to obtain any point only goes to show that you are lacking in

ability and are unworthy of becoming a member of the academy! I suggest you stop embarrassing yourself here."

They might not be able to match up to Zhang Xuan, but without a doubt, they possessed capability superior to most of their peers, and they had the rights to be proud.

"Indeed, stop your shameful actions here. If everyone were to beg for points just because they couldn't earn any, the academy wouldn't be called the Master Teacher Academy but the Beggar Academy!"

"You only have yourself to blame for not working hard enough!"

"You are not fated with the Master Teacher Academy, so just leave... Don't soil the dignity of master teachers here!"

...

The master teachers in the region also waved their hands disdainfully in response to Hu Qing's actions.

It was undignified for a master teacher to beg for points like that. If they were to condone such actions amongst them, how could they hold their heads up high and preach to the world?

A failure meant a failure. Since Elder Mo had set this a rule, they were meant to follow it.

"Alright..."

Knowing that it was hopeless, Hu Qing's body trembled uncontrollably as he stood up.

At this instant, he felt as if the wind had blew away every bit of dignity he carried.

While master teachers were expected to behave nobly, they were still mortal. There was no mortal who could truly be selfless, and even master teachers had their own desires and goals.

"Forget it..." Hu Qing shook his head.

He knew that even if he were to abandon his pride, there was not a single person here who would give him a single point. Since that was the case, he might as well clutch onto the final shred of pride he had and leave with his head held high.

Hu!

But just as he was about to walk away, Elder Mo suddenly appeared in the air, and with a resounding voice, he said, "In this examination, there are a total of 6817 people who passed the examination. Those who failed to obtain a single point have failed the examination, and they are not fated with the Master Teacher Academy!"

"Not fated..."

The faces of the twenty thousand people who had failed the examination turned pale.

While they knew what the outcome of the examination would be, it was still difficult for them to accept it. Their hopes and dreams lay within the Master Teacher Academy, and after all they had been through, they couldn't accept failure so easily.

"However, there's no need to worry. Upon learning of this news, Zhang shi of Huanyu Empire approached me, and he offered to give his points to the others so that everyone can pass the examination. He hopes that our Master Teacher Pavilion can grow stronger through this!

"After careful consideration, I decided to agree to his request.

"In other words, from today onwards, everyone here will be a student of our Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy!" Elder Mo announced grandly.

"Give points... to us?"

"Zhang shi was willing to fork out his points so that we could pass the examination?"

"This..."

Everyone was stunned by the sudden news. At the same moment, Hu Qing's body began trembling in agitation, and tears began streaming down his cheeks.

Just for a single point, he abandoned his pride, fell to his knees, and pleaded desperately with another man. But he was rejected mercilessly, and he thought that this was where his journey would end!

Yet, at the lowest point in his life, Zhang shi stepped forward and offered to give his points to everyone so that they could clear the examination...

This was the magnanimity that a master teacher should possess, selflessly putting the human race above his own needs!

"Zhang shi... thank you!" Hu Qing fell to his knees once more and vowed solemnly, "From this day forward, you shall be my benefactor. Regardless of what you ask of me, I'll do it without any hesitation!"

But different from the previous time, he had kneeled willingly this time around!

"This..."

Seeing those who had failed the examination mutter words of gratitude for Zhang shi, Yu Cheng and Senior Feng's bodies trembled.

It was just a moment ago that they had rejected giving out a single point, and in the next, it was announced that Zhang shi was going to give out his points so that everyone could pass the examination...

'Did your face slap have to come so quick and exaggerated?'

The duo quickly scanned the surroundings, only to see disdainful gazes from the freshmen on them. It was as if their eyes were

saying, "How could the both of them be master teachers but behave so differently?"

Pu!

Unable to stand it any longer, Yu Cheng felt his old injuries acting up, and he spurted a mouthful of blood.

At the same time, Senior Feng also found the sight before him turning dark. He had been traumatized so many times that he had lost his confidence.

What in the world was this? Why was it that nothing good ever happened from anything associated with that Zhang Xuan?

Chapter 726 Luo Ruoxin

"Tomorrow, you will be choosing your teachers. Senior students, organize the freshmen and bring them to their living quarters..." After dealing with the miscellaneous issues, Elder Mo issued some instructions to the senior students before returning back to the gazebo.

"Zhang shi, you need not go with the rest. It'll be hard for you to cultivate in those shared dormitories. Follow me back to the academy later on, and I'll arrange individual living quarters for you!" Elder Mo said.

As one of the Ten Great Elders of the Master Teacher Academy, he possessed the rights to determine a student's living quarters.

A top-notch genius like Zhang shi shouldn't be staying in the shared dormitories like others.

"Thank you, Elder Mo."

Understanding the other party's intentions, Zhang Xuan clasped his fist in gratitude.

He had too many secrets on him, so it would be best for him to get individual lodging for himself.

After which, Mo Gaoyuan offered a ride to Elder Mo and Zhang Xuan, and soon, the three of them were headed for the Master Teacher Academy on the back of the Langya Saint Beast.

With the senior students dealing with the matters here, and Bai shi holding the fort, there was nothing for them to worry about.

With the swiftness of Langya Saint Beast, it wasn't long before a massive academy came into sight.

Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy was built to house a hundred thousand master teachers. There were lakes and mountains within the compounds of the academy, and gazing

down from the sky, it looked like a castle.

Even the entire Myriad Kingdom City seemed to pale in comparison to the academy.

It was no wonder this was the place where the top-notch geniuses of different empires converged. Just the size of the academy itself already far surpassed the capitals of the smaller empires.

"This is the Elite Sector, where the most outstanding master teachers of each grade stay. Take my token and find the student-in-charge to organize lodging for you. Pavilion Master Mo and I will have to meet the other elders to discuss that problem!"

Soon, the Langya Saint Beast landed near a cluster of the academy's residences. At this point, Elder Mo flicked his wrist and threw his token to Zhang Xuan.

After grabbing the token, Zhang Xuan began to survey the surroundings. It was a beautiful place with lush greenery and a clear stream flowing through the area. The exquisite-looking residences were lined side by side in a row.

A Spirit Gathering Formation was set up in each of these residences, creating a dense concentration of spiritual energy in the area. Even without entering the residences, one would already feel refreshed and revitalized under the nourishment of the spiritual energy.

'As expected of the Elite Sector, it's indeed extravagant!'

After taking a look, Zhang Xuan nodded in awe.

These Spirit Gathering Formations were of a higher grade than the one he had inscribed back in Honghai City, each having reached grade-6. If one were to cultivate here, one would definitely make much greater progress than compared to elsewhere.

The Master Teacher Academy couldn't afford to offer such luxury to all of its students, so only the most outstanding of geniuses were allowed to reside in these residences.

"Thank you, I'll be heading down now!" Zhang Xuan said as he leaped off the back of Langya Saint Beast.

Elder Mo and Mo Gaoyuan glanced at one another before gesturing for the Langya Saint Beast to take off into the distance.

The matter regarding the appearance of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was a grave issue. They had no time to lose.

A few minutes later, they arrived at a sealed chamber.

There was a total of thirteen seats in the room, each of them reserved for the most esteemed figures in the academy, namely the principal and the Ten Great Elders.

A powerful formation was installed within the room, ensuring that nothing discussed in there would leak out.

"What has happened for you to summon us so urgently?"

Just as the duo took their seats, a few elders suddenly pushed open the door and walked in with deep frowns.

The last time an emergency meeting had been held was when the old principal had gone missing. What could have happened this time for Elder Mo and Pavilion Master Mo to summon all of them so urgently?

"Take a seat please. We'll start when everyone arrives!" Elder Mo gestured to the seats around him.

The elders nodded and sat at their respective positions.

Soon, the door opened once more, and a few more elders entered.

Before long, eleven seats were filled.

"Elder Mo and Pavilion Master Mo, you can speak now!" The white-bearded elder who seemed to be the oldest amongst the group gestured for them to begin.

"Alright!" Elder Mo nodded.

Flicking his wrist, he took out a Record Crystal and said, "Before I

begin, I would like you all to watch this first..."

With a tap of his finger, the battle scars on the top of Leiyuan Peak which he had recorded earlier appeared before everyone's eyes.

The elders were initially perplexed to see the rubble in the crystal, but after taking a closer look, their faces slowly turned livid.

"These are... the marks of battle from an Otherworldly Demon? How is Senior Byzantium Helios then?" the white-bearded elder asked worriedly.

The others also swiftly turned their gazes to Elder Mo.

As a member of the Ten Great Elders, a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, just by looking at the scene recorded by the Record Crystal, he was still able to deduce the parties involved in the battle.

"Senior Byzantium Helios... has gone missing!" Elder Mo said grimly.

"Missing?" The other master teachers were stunned by the revelation, and even Mo Gaoyuan's expression was colored with disbelief.

Back then, Elder Mo had only said that he had found traces left behind by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, but he hadn't gone into much detail. As a result, he didn't think that the Byzantium Helios Beast would actually end up being attacked by Otherworldly Demons and go missing.

"This is what happened..." Not daring to hide anything, Elder Mo swiftly revealed his agreement with Byzantium Helios Beast, as well as what he'd found on the peak.

The white-bearded elder slammed his palm on the table and declared grandly, "How dare those Otherworldly Demons infiltrate our Hongyuan City and kidnap Byzantium Helios Saint Beast! For

the reputation of our Master Teacher Academy, we must apprehend them!"

The Ten Great Elders were responsible for governing the Master Teacher Academy, and they were each in charge of a school in the academy. For one, Elder Mo wasn't just an elder in this academy, he was also the head of the Beast Tamer School.

On the other hand, the white-bearded elder was the head of the Martial Arts School, Xu Changqing.

A female elder harrumphed coldly.

"This is no longer an issue of our school's reputation, but the safety of Senior Byzantium Helios!"

She was the head of the Terpsichore School, Wei Ranxue.

"Senior Byzantium Helios is the tamed beast of the old principal. He has braved through life-and-death situations with us, and he had slaughtered innumerable Otherworldly Demons to bring peace to mankind. With all that he had done, how could we face the old principal if anything were to happen to him? And what rights would we have to call ourselves the Ten Great Master Teachers if we couldn't even save him?"

"Indeed, we must not allow anything to happen to Senior Byzantium Helios! However, we don't have any clues as to his whereabouts at the moment, so we shouldn't act recklessly," said Elder Mo. "At this moment, our primary focus should be on finding Senior Byzantium Helios' whereabouts. If he's still alive, we'll find some way to save him. If he has been killed, we should avenge him even at the cost of our lives!"

Another two of the elders added the discussion.

"I agree. However, I think that we should carry out our actions discreetly first, or else we might risk alarming the Otherworldly Demons. If they were to learn that we're on their trail, they might potentially resort to extreme actions!"

"I concur. Since the Otherworldly Demons dared to lay their hands on Senior Byzantium Helios, it is unlikely that they would hesitate in attacking the academy too. We can't discount the possibility that this might be a scheme to lure us away from the academy. Thus, we should proceed warily with the investigation."

"That is exactly what I am worried about. I fear that they might have left behind those marks intentionally to lure us into a trap..." Elder Mo frowned.

There didn't seem to be any attempt by the Otherworldly Demons to conceal the marks of battle on Leiyuan Peak, as if the other party was intentionally showing it to them. It was due to his worry that this was a trap by the Otherworldly Demons that Elder Mo was hesitant to take action on his own, choosing to hold a conference with the other elders first instead of combing through the mountain range to search for Senior Byzantium Helios.

After a moment of discussion, the group was still unable to decide on anything. It was at that moment that the head of the Apothecary School, Lu Feng, interjected in the discussion. "Senior Byzantium Helios possesses a fighting prowess far above us. If even he wasn't a match for the enemy, it's unlikely that we will be able to save him even if we do uncover his whereabouts!"

The others nodded in agreement as well.

Just like them, the Byzantium Helios Saint Beast was at Saint 1-dan pinnacle as well. However, as a saint beast, he wielded strength far beyond the others. Yet, the Byzantium Helios Saint Beast had been captured before he could even get an opportunity to send out a help signal to the rest of them. Through this, it could be seen how formidable the adversary they were facing was.

If they couldn't defeat the Otherworldly Demons, even if they managed to find the whereabouts of the Byzantium Helios Beast, they wouldn't be able to save him.

"In a few days, Mu shi from Qingyuan Conferred Empire will be

making a trip here to select the new principal and investigate the death of the old principal. When the time comes, we can report this matter to him and have him help us look into the matter as well!" School Head Lu said.

"This..." At this point, everyone hesitated.

If they were to rely on the headquarters for everything, wouldn't that be as good as saying that they, as the Ten Great Master Teachers, were inept and powerless to deal with issues?

"I know what you are thinking of, but the enemy we are facing is an existence who was able to bypass our security and abduct Senior Byzantium Helios without alarming anyone. This issue is already beyond our ability, so this matter must be reported to the headquarters!" School Head Lu said affirmatively.

The Apothecary School was the number one school in the Master Teacher Academy, and this gave more weight to his words.

"Alright..." After a moment of contemplation, the other master teachers eventually conceded.

Just as they were about to discuss their next course of action, School Head Lu suddenly flicked his wrist, and a Communication Jade Token appeared in his hands. He took a glance at it, and his eyebrows shot up.

"Everyone, follow me. Mu shi has arrived!"

"Mu shi is already here? So early?"

"Didn't he say that it would take a few more days?"

"It's impossible for us to fathom the thoughts of experts like him. Don't forget, he did say that he would be able to arrive a month ago, but he ended up postponing his arrival all the way until now..."

"That's true..."

Initially, Mu shi had sent a message to them, saying that he

would arrive at Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy a month ago, but after a long wait, he never came. But just a day ago, he had sent another message over saying that he had been held up by some issues, and he would arrive a few days later. However, he ended up showing up that day instead.

As such, his arrival had caught everyone off-guard.

Amidst discussions, the group walked over to the lounge where the academy welcomed esteemed guests. Soon, they saw an old man with a snowy beard seated on one of the chairs with a dignified posture. Seated beside the old man was a young lady who seemed to be in her early twenties.

"Mu shi!"

Upon walking into the room, the elders immediately clasped their fists and bowed respectfully.

As a 7-star master teacher, Mu shi was one of the top figures in the Master Teacher Academy. Even as the Ten Great Master Teachers, they dared not to show the slightest disrespect to the other party.

"Un. Allow me to introduce to you all; this is Luo shi. She's... a junior of mine. She is a 6-star master teacher, and as a part of her training, she will be serving as a teacher here for the time being. Thus, I'll have to trouble you to make the necessary arrangements." Standing up, Mu shi gestured to the young lady beside him and introduced her.

"Junior?"

Taken aback, everyone quickly turned their gazes to the young lady. At this point, the young lady stood up, clasped her fist, and bowed. "Ruoxin pays respect to the elders of Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy!"

"6-star master teacher? She is already a 6-star master teacher despite her young age?"

Everyone was taken aback.

Luo Ruoxin looked as if she was barely in her twenties. Talent wasn't a sufficient reason to explain how one could qualify as a 6-star master teacher at such an age. The chances were that she had come from an incredible family or possessed an astounding background!

It was likely that her being a junior of Mu shi's was a lie.

As a 7-star master teacher, it would be difficult for him to groom a twenty-year-old 6-star master teacher.

Most likely, she was the offspring of a Sage Clan, heading to a lower empire so as to experience the taste of life and temper her spirit.

Only such clans could groom such incredible geniuses!

"It is incredible that Luo shi has reached such heights at your young age; you have my admiration. Regarding the issue of taking up a teaching role in our academy, I'll make arrangements for it right now. May I know... what do you specialize in? Is there any school you are interested in?" School Head Lu asked with a smile.

Chapter 727 Elite Sector

"Didn't the academy just accept a new batch of freshmen recently? Why don't you allow her to conduct a public lecture and take in any students who are willing to acknowledge her as their teacher?" Mu shi proposed.

"This..." School Head Lu hesitated for a moment before eventually nodding, "Alright then!"

Going by conventions, new teachers weren't qualified to conduct public lectures, but since it was a request from Mu shi, they were willing to bend the rules.

Besides, Mu shi's attitude also seemed to verify the guesses in everyone's heart.

If Luo Ruoxin wasn't a descendent of a Sage Clan, why would Mu shi make such a request on her behalf? If she was just an ordinary junior, he could have just left her to fend for herself in the academy. There was no need for him to go through so much trouble.

More importantly, Luo Ruoxin had a nonchalant expression on her face, as if it was only right for such a thing to happen.

Only the descendant of a powerful clan would dare to put on such an attitude.

"Mu shi..." After making arrangements for Luo Ruoxin, the elders gathered around Mu shi and told him about the issue regarding the Otherworldly Demons.

"I was still troubled as to who I should nominate as the new principal. After all, regardless of whom I choose, there will bound to be disagreements, and this could pose significant inefficiencies in the management of the academy. But since such a matter happened..."

Mu shi hesitated for a moment before continuing, "How about

this? Of the ten of you, whoever who finds Byzantium Helios Beast, saves him, and wins his acknowledgement shall be the next principal! You all should have no objections with this, right?"

While the Ten Great Elders managed separate schools each, it was inevitable that there would be some degree of rivalry among them. Otherwise, the principal's seat wouldn't have remained empty despite it being years since the disappearance of the old principal.

Mu shi had been troubled over this issue when he was dispatched to Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy to nominate the next principal, but this incident came at a timely moment.

Through making this the selection criterion, everyone would stand an equal chance at becoming the next principal. Furthermore, through saving the old principal's tamed beast, the new principal would be able to build up his fame and authority, making it hard for anyone to undermine him.

"This... Alright!"

The elders glanced at one another, and after a moment of hesitation, they eventually nodded in agreement.

While this matter would be extremely tricky to deal with, it could also be viewed as an opportunity to display their capability.

If they were able to do what others weren't able to, that could in a way show that they had to qualification to head the Master Teacher Academy.

Otherwise, should the current situation where no one was content with allowing another head them, the Master Teacher Academy would continue to remain divided.

...

While the elders were welcoming Mu shi, Zhang Xuan had finally reached the very center of the Elite Sector.

Due to Elder Mo's anxiety to meet the other elders to discuss the issue regarding the Otherworldly Demons, he could only figure out the way himself.

"If I'm not mistaken, there must be a massive spirit vein beneath the ground. The deeper I head in, the closer I reach the center of the spirit vein, the richer the spiritual energy in the surroundings is!" Zhang Xuan muttered as he felt the changes in the spiritual energy concentration around him.

Most likely, a senior of the academy had set up a massive Spirit Gathering Formation in the area, and over the years, it had grown to become an immense spirit vein.

Even though the residences were built side by side, there was a significant difference between among them. The further in the residences were, the closer they were to the core of the spirit vein. If one could get a lodging at the core of the spirit vein, their cultivation would surely soar swiftly.

But regardless of how concentrated the spiritual energy in the region was, it didn't have much significance to Zhang Xuan. After all, he cultivated mainly through absorbing spirit stones. No matter how concentrated the spiritual energy in the surroundings was, could it possibly possess spiritual energy more concentrated than within a spirit stone?

After looting Yu Cheng and Senior Feng's storage rings, he wasn't lacking any spirit stones at the moment. However, as he had yet to compile the Heaven's Path Divine Art for the next tier, he could only put aside his cultivation for the moment.

In any case, the positioning of his residence didn't matter to him. All he needed now was a quiet residence where he could cultivate.

After walking for a moment longer, a massive building came into sight.

This was where Elder Mo had told him to report to in order to

claim a residence in the Elite Sector.

Zhang Xuan slowly walked up the stone stairs and entered the building.

There was only a handful of senior students seated on the chairs in the lounge, and they seemed to be discussing the difficulties they had met in their cultivation.

"For the Northern Harmony Palm, the zhenqi should start flowing from the left and terminate at the right. Through this way, the zhenqi could make a full circulation around one's body, thus maximizing the might of the technique!"

"I don't think that it's as simple as you have said. If that's all to the technique, we would have long mastered it. There must be a problem somewhere with our understanding..."

"I recall my teacher once telling me that this palm technique should rise from the south and end in the north. I think that the direction is significant in this technique as well..."

The group discussed with a deep frown on their foreheads.

To qualify for the Master Teacher Academy, one had to be a 4-star pinnacle master teacher at the minimum. Even though it was hard to determine what grade the seniors before him were in, they carried a relatively powerful aura.

As the other party hadn't driven their zhenqi, it was impossible for Zhang Xuan to gauge their strength without using the Eye of Insight. Nevertheless, their cultivation was unlikely to be beyond Cosmos Bridge realm.

"Seniors!" Seeing that the group were engrossed in their chat, Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and greeted them with a smile.

"You are..."

Hearing those words, the group immediately turned their gazes over. However, upon realizing that it was an unfamiliar face, they

frowned.

They were the few worst scoring students in the academy this year, so the academy had punished them by assigning them to various places to do menial labor.

The place they were currently in was the Elite Sector, and students who were qualified to stay here were the top geniuses of their grade. As the academy wanted them to focus their attention on furthering their cultivation, their daily chores ended up falling in their hands.

Waiting upon those geniuses would temper their mental fortitude, and at the same time, it provides a platform for them to build connections with those geniuses. These connections may prove to be useful to their future.

As such, the group here was familiar with everyone in the Elite Sector, and the young man before them was clearly a foreign face.

"I am a freshman of the academy. Elder Mo directed me to you for a residence in this sector, so I'll be troubling you for that." With a light chuckle, Wang Chong whipped out the token Elder Mo had passed to him.

"Elder Mo?" Taken aback, the group hurriedly got to their feet.

Elder Mo was the head of the Beast School, as well as one of the Ten Great Master Teachers. Even as seniors, they dared not to disrespect a student whom Elder Mo had directed here.

After checking his token and verifying it to be the real thing, one of the older students clasped his fist and said, "Give us a moment, junior. We'll bring you to your residence right after some discussion!"

With those words, he gathered the group to a side of the room.

Due to the spiritual energy concentration gradient down the spirit vein, there was a significant difference between each residence. If they were to settle him into the wrong room, they

might bring trouble upon themselves.

As such, it was imperative that they discussed this matter thoroughly.

"Since Elder Mo directed him here personally, that junior probably possesses incredible talent. It just happens that the junior living in the first residence in the D Sector has just moved away after being promoted to Grade 2, so we could settle him there."

"The first residence in the D Sector? That sounds like a good plan!" Another senior nodded in agreement.

The Elite Sector could be divided into the A Sector, B Sector, C Sector, and D Sector, corresponding to Grade 4, Grade 3, Grade 2, and Grade 1 respectively. Naturally, those in the higher grade would be prioritized in terms of proximity to the core of the spirit vein.

Even though the junior before them was only a freshman, just the fact that he was directed here by Elder Mo hinted at his capability, making him qualified to stay in the first residence.

"But is it really good to assign a freshman the first residence?" While there were some who agreed with that course of action, some voiced their objections as well.

"She's right. The other students have been eyeing the first residence ever since news broke that Cheng Yue would be promoted to Grade 2. Those fellows would surely be outraged if they were to hear that a freshman had taken their place!" Another senior added.

The grades in the Master Teacher Academy were determined by one's ranking as a master teacher, not how many years one had been in the academy. One would enroll into the academy as a 4-star pinnacle master teacher, and the requirement to be promoted to Grade 2 was to become a 5-star master teacher.

In order to advance to 5-star, not only must one's cultivation

reach Transcendent Mortal 6-dan Cosmos Bridge realm, one's Soul Depth and knowledge must also reach a certain mark. On top of that, one must have five 5-star supporting occupations.

As such, it would take around a decade for an average master teacher to advance a grade!

It was in view of this that the Master Teacher Tournament was only held once every ten years. Outside of it, the Master Teacher Academy would only accept a handful of students each year. On that note, that was how Huanyu Empire's Ye Qian joined the academy.

But getting back to the matter at hand, as long as one hadn't made the breakthrough to 5-star yet, one would be ineligible to be promoted to Grade 2.

The first residence in the D Sector had always been occupied by a Grade 1 student known as Cheng Yue, and he had just successfully passed his 5-star master teacher examination this year. As such, he had left his previous residence for one in the C Sector.

However, there were many other Grade 1 master teachers who were eyeing the same residence as well. If they were to assign it to a freshman, they might turn hostile against that freshman.

"But what can we do about it? It was Elder Mo who pointed him here, they will have to accept it somehow. In any case, we aren't the ones who should be troubled by this matter. This will be an opportunity for us to see how capable the freshman is for Elder Mo to give him his token!" One of the seniors said with a chuckle.

"That's true..." The others nodded in agreement as well.

After discussing the matter, they walked up to Zhang Xuan and said, "We have found a residence for you. This way please!"

With those words, the group began walking to the D Sector, and Zhang Xuan followed closely behind them.

Soon, they arrived at the entrance of a residence.

After taking a quick glance of it, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

This residence was located very close to the core of the spirit vein, so it was rich in spiritual energy. On top of that, its surroundings were very quiet. In other words, as long as he were to set up a formation around the residence, no one would be aware of it even if he were to pummel the Byzantium Helios Beast in it.

"Zhang shi, this will be your residence. Here is the key!" The senior opened the door before passing it over to him.

They had learned of the young man's name on the way here, so they changed their method of address from junior to Zhang shi.

"Thank you!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

But just as he was about to step into the residence, a young man suddenly appeared with an awful complexion on his face and said, "Huang Xing and Zhou Tong, what do you mean by this? I've told you many times to hand the key over to me, but you rejected my request again and again. Who is this fellow? Why are you giving the key to him instead?"

"Are you in Grade 1? Why haven't I seen you around before?"

"To attempt to move into the residence right after enrolling in the academy, do you think that you are Cheng Yue?"

A man and a lady dressed in the master teacher robe with four stars pinned on their chest entered right after the young man. Upon seeing the key in Zhang Xuan's hands, they glared at him in displeasure.

They were the occupants of the second, third, and fourth residence in the D Sector, and they had been eyeing this residence for a very long time.

If they could take down the first residence, not only would they get to enjoy the concentrated spiritual energy there, it would also signify that they were the top of the Grade 1 students, a position of

immense prestige.

The trio had thought that with Cheng Yue's departure, the residence would be passed down to one of them. Who knew that Huang Xing and the others would bring a complete stranger in!

Who the hell was this?

Even if they had offered the residence to you, to move in without any hesitation... Do you even know what this signifies?

Chapter 728 Three Great Geniuses Looking For Trouble

"Please calm down. It was not me but Elder Mo who decided Zhang Shi's lodging..." The student known as Huang Xing hurriedly explained the situation.

"Elder Mo?" The trio was taken aback by the revelation.

Why would the esteemed Elder Mo, one of the Ten Great Master Teachers, direct a mere Grade 1 student here?

They glanced at one another hesitantly for a moment before a gleam of determination flashed across the eyes of the first young man, and he gritted his teeth and said, "Regardless of whether it's an instruction from Elder Mo or not, to stay in the first residence, you must first possess strength surpassing us. This is a rule established by the Master Teacher Academy. Flout it, and it won't be just us but the entire Grade 1 cohort who will object to this! This young man over here, do you dare to compete with me?"

In order to further motivate the students, the residence placings in the Elite Sector were determined by one's strength and capability. This was a long-established tradition of the Master Teacher Academy, so even an esteemed elder like Elder Mo would have to think twice before flouting it.

"Zhang Shi, this young man here is Wu Chan. He possesses a cultivation of Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle, and with his superior strength, he managed to clinch the second place in the Annual Tournament among the Grade 1 students. It is only due to his lacking Soul Depth that he hasn't been promoted to a 5-star master teacher yet..." One of the seniors who had led Zhang Xuan here sent him a telepathic message discreetly, explaining the background of the three students before him.

"Annual Tournament?" Zhang Xuan asked curiously.

Back when he was still in Tianxuan Kingdom as a teacher, there was something of this sort in Hongtian Academy as well. To this date, he could still recall how much trouble he had gone through for his students for it. Was he going to have to undergo it as a student now that he was in Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?

Furthermore, this Annual Tournament was likely going to be very different from the one he had in Hongtian Academy.

After all, Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy was built not for cultivators but master teachers.

"Yes. Every year, there would be an inter-grade tournament where students would clash with one another with their capabilities as master teachers. Only the one who emerges as the champion of the tournament is qualified to stay in this residence..." Seeing the confusion on Zhang Xuan's face, the senior explained.

According to the other party's words, it seemed like the Annual Tournament should be somewhat alike to the Master Teacher Tournament.

Every year, the students would be put against one another, and they would be ranked according to how they perform. Rewards would be offered to those who had performed spectacularly to further motivate them the students to work harder.

Judging from the attitude of these three students before him, it seemed like they had qualms regarding him taking the first residence.

However, that was to be expected. How embarrassing it would be if it were to be made known that the first residence which they had fought over for so long had been taken by a freshman! They wouldn't be able to face other students in the academy!

Realizing this fact, Zhang Xuan turned to Wu Chan and smiled, "Sure. What do you want to compete with me on?"

As much as Zhang Xuan wanted to keep a low profile, that didn't mean that he was afraid of trouble.

If he couldn't establish a clear dominance over the other students, he would soon find a steady stream of challengers queuing up before his residence, wanting to defeat him and claim the residence for themselves. If that was going to be the case, he would rather settle it once and for all.

"By right, as students of the Master Teacher Academy, we should be competing on our capabilities as master teachers. However, that will be both lengthy and troublesome. Thus, I propose that we settle it through a physical duel!" Wu Chan said with a confident smile.

There were simply too many aspects of a master teacher that one could be evaluated on, so competing on them one by one would be inconvenient and time-consuming. As such, settling it with their fists was a more viable option in this case.

"A physical duel?"

"That's right. We might be master teachers, but there should be little doubt that our cultivation forms the very foundation of our capabilities. As long as you are able to defeat me in a physical duel, I won't utter a word of complaint regarding your stay here!" Wu Chan replied.

"I see!" Zhang Xuan nodded. After which, he turned to the other two and asked, "What about you two? What do you want to compete on?"

"Me? I want to compete with you on the execution of Impartation of Heaven's Will!" the female student replied.

Perhaps the female student had tailored her master teacher robe, but it was extremely fitting on her. It shaped out her slim and elegant figure beautifully.

Even though her charm could hardly match up to Luo Qiqi's and

Yu Fei-er—those two were existences who were touched by the Goddess of Beauty after all—she still commanded an elegance that would easily put her in the center of gazes.

"She's the second runner up of the Annual Tournament, Ran Xiaoxiao," the senior informed Zhang Xuan telepathically. "As for the last guy, he's the third runner up, Xiao Nan!"

Noting down what the senior said, Zhang Xuan turned to Xiao Nan and asked, "What about you?"

"I'll compete with you in a physical duel as well!" Xiao Nan replied.

"Alright!" Seeing that the two men wanted a physical duel while the lady wanted to compete of Impartation of Heaven's Will, Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella. Turning to the female master teacher, Ran Xiaoxiao, he said, "I won't take advantage of you. You're Ran Xiaoxiao, right? You shall fight in my stead and teach the both of them a lesson!"

"Ah? I shall fight in your stead?" Ran Xiaoxiao froze upon hearing Zhang Xuan's words.

Is this fellow a lunatic?

The three of them had come here to teach him a lesson, and yet he wanted her to fight the others on his behalf? Isn't it a little too early to be dreaming?

Wu Chan and Xiao Nan were startled by Zhang Xuan's words, and they turned to look at him as if he was a fool.

They thought a man who was directed here by Elder Mo would possess some kind of extraordinary talents, but to think that that talent would be boasting!

Ran Xiaoxiao had come together with them to challenge him, so how could she possibly make a move against them.

"That's right. If I'm not mistaken, it seems like it has been three

months since your Ziwei and Yingtai acupoints are sealed, causing the zhenqi in your body started flowing in the opposite direction. Do you feel an intense itch across your entire body?" Zhang Xuan asked with a light chuckle.

Even though Ran Xiaoxiao hadn't executed any battle technique, her current cultivation realm was only at Cosmos Bridge realm, so the Eye of Insight was effective against her.

"Y-you..." Ran Xiaoxiao's eyes widened in astonishment.

It was true that it had been three months since her Ziwei and Yingtai acupoints had been sealed, resulting in a stalemate in her cultivation. As zhenqi began to accumulate, an intense itch gradually consumed her, leaving her in great agony.

"If you were to do as I say, you will be able to resolve that issue easily!" Ignoring her astonishment, Zhang Xuan spoke nonchalantly.

"The reason why your two acupoints were sealed is due to your incorrect zhenqi circulation technique. Direct your zhenqi to your Huihai acupoint and..." Just like this, Zhang Xuan swiftly listed a dozen more acupoints.

Ran Xiaoxiao was still hesitant whether she should give it a try after hearing those acupoints when she suddenly felt her zhenqi surging uncontrollably through her body.

"This is... Impartation of Heaven's Will? Crap..."

Upon realizing what was going on, Ran Xiaoxiao's face paled, and she nearly burst into tears.

She had just said that she would compete with the other party on Impartation of Heaven's Will when the other party started even before she was ready. Wasn't this cheating!

She immediately tried to forcefully terminate her zhenqi's circulation so as to dispel the effects of the Impartation of Heaven's Will when she suddenly felt the seal on her Ziwei and Yingtai

acupoints loosening. It seemed as if they would open up at any moment now.

"This..." Ran Xiaoxiao blinked her eyes blankly, dumbstruck.

Could it be that... the other party's method was right? Circulating her zhenqi in such a pathway would resolve the bottleneck which had trapped her for three months?

With such thoughts in mind, she abandoned the notion of terminating her zhenqi's circulation, allowing her zhenqi to flow freely under the effects of the Impartation of Heaven's Will.

Hong long!

In just a short instant, she felt her bottleneck dissipating under the flow of zhenqi, and a feeling of lightness abruptly embraced her body. Her aura also became much more refined and sharper.

"Alright, you should go and duel with them now!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

"Yes!"

Under the effects of the Impartation of Heaven's Will, Zhang Xuan's words were absolute, leaving her no room for objections. With a faint smile, she turned around and charged at Wu Chan and Xiao Nan.

"What the freaking hell!"

"Screw this bullshit!"

Seeing Ran Xiaoxiao charging at them with furious momentum, how could the duo remain oblivious to what was going on?

They had been waiting for Zhang Shi to duel with them, but the comrade whom they marched here with ended up turning against them instead. The abrupt twist in the situation left them feeling light-headed, and curses spilled out of their mouths.

In a normal duel between master teachers, one would typically test the capability of one's opponent before making any move. Yet,

the first thing the fellow did was to beguile one of their own to side with him.

Nevertheless, one thing was for sure. Given that Ran Xiaoxiao had chosen to challenge him to an Impartation of Heaven's Will duel, it could only mean that she had reached incredible heights in her Soul Depth. But even so, she ended up falling prey to the other party's words. This goes to say that he did possess exceptional means despite being a freshman.

It would be unwise to underestimate the young man before them.

"Hmph! If you think that you can win against us just by beguiling Ran Xiaoxiao, you are being way too naive! As rivals, we have clashed dozens of times over the years. We are well aware of her cultivation techniques, battle techniques, and the maneuvers she usually utilizes in battle..." Wu Chan harrumphed coldly as he easily dodged Ran Xiaoxiao's consecutive punches with movements as swift as lightning.

As the second, third, and fourth rankers in the Annual Tournament, it was inevitable that they would view one another as rivals. They had clashed with one another frequently, granting them a thorough understanding of each other's moves. If that fellow thought that he could defeat the both of them through beguiling one of them through Impartation of Heaven's Will, he was dreaming!

"Wu Chan, I'll deal with Ran Xiaoxiao. You should go and teach that fellow a lesson..." Xiao Nan harrumphed.

"Alright!" Wu Chan nodded.

However, just as he was about to advance for the young man, the latter's nonchalant voice suddenly sounded in the air, "Coalescence of the Night Rain, Drifting Snow of the Glacier Mountain, Frosted Leaves Crimson Blossoms..."

The words were neither fast nor slow, paced pleasantly to the

ear.

Those phrases were the maneuvers of the battle techniques they specialized in.

However, under normal circumstances, these maneuvers couldn't be executed back-to-back with one another. However, for some reason, he suddenly felt a nearly uncontrollable urge to execute them.

"No! I mustn't fall for his tricks!" Knowing that if he were to really do so, he would fall under the other party's control like Ran Xiaoxiao, becoming a tool under his Impartation of Heaven's Will, Wu Chan bit his tongue in determination.

Under the excruciating pain, he felt his head clearing up. Following which, he heard a series of pah pah pah pah, and by the time he turned his head, Xiao Nan's face was already swollen as if a pig's head.

"This..." Astonished by the sight before him, Wu Chan's eyeballs nearly popped from their sockets.

Even if Xiao Nan possessed strength beneath Ran Xiaoxiao, it should be impossible for him to be defeated in just a few moves!

For this to happen, Wu Chan could only think of one possibility... that was if those maneuvers the other party were put together, not only was it possible to execute it, it would even display an astounding prowess!

Otherwise, considering how Ran Xiaoxiao and Xiao Nan were nearly equally matched, it didn't make sense how the latter could be bashed so badly in just a few breaths!

"I don't believe it..."

The more he thought about it, the more Wu Chan felt doubtful and apprehensive about the matter. Gritting his teeth, he charged right at Ran Xiaoxiao.

As a practitioner of the same battle technique, he was very familiar with these maneuvers as well. Upon seeing the other party execute them, he immediately knew how he should move to evade those attacks. But for some reason, the other party's moves seemed to be much more difficult to deal with than usual.

After barely avoiding a few blows by a hair's breadth, he was already sweating profusely.

Clearly, Ran Xiaoxiao's cultivation had advanced significantly under that fellow's guidance, to the point where even he could hardly match up to her!

Could an Impartation of Heaven's Will advance Ran Xiaoxiao's cultivation by so much?

Or was the combination of those few maneuvers that powerful?

"Screw it! I should just give it a try myself..."

Wu Chan took a step back to leap out of the battle before executing the moves in the order which the young man had said earlier.

Puuu!!

But by the time he reached the third blow, he suddenly felt his zhenqi running amok as it abruptly ran in the opposite direction. His face paled, and crimson blood spewed from his mouth.

Pah pah pah!

At the same moment, Ran Xiaoxiao had already rushed up to him and slammed him onto the ground with a slap.

"This..." Zhang Xuan scratched his head in bewilderment, uncomprehending of the situation before him.

"Ran Xiaoxiao has just opened her Ziwei and Yingtai acupoints, and she has the constitution of a female as well, so it's fine for her to use these moves in succession. But what is this fellow doing? Does he know that using moves so haphazardly can make his

cultivation go berserk easily..."

Chapter 729 Blacksmith School

Every single battle technique has its own unique zhenqi circulation method and execution style, so it's important for a cultivator to pair them together wisely.

Using an analogy, while it's possible for one to punch his left fist to the right while punching the right fist to the left, the clash in the momentum from both actions made in unison would potentially result in muscle tear and disturbances in one's zhenqi.

This was the problem Wu Chan was suffering from at this instant.

The maneuvers which Zhang Xuan advised Ran Xiaoxiao on was in consideration of her unique circumstances having just opened her Ziwei and Yingtai acupoint and her incredible physical flexibility as a woman.

On the other hand, Wu Chan had yet to open those who acupoints, and his body was slightly more rigid as a male as well, making it highly dangerous for him to execute those moves in succession.

I am guiding Ran Xiaoxiao, why in the world are you trying to learn it as well? Look at what this brings you, you ended up crippling yourself before you can achieve anything...

With this incident, there was no way Wu Chan could be a match for Ran Xiaoxiao anymore!

If Wu Chan were to know Zhang Xuan's thoughts, he would surely burst into tears.

Your Impartation of Heaven's Will is so powerful, and my Soul Depth has been my main weakness all along. After seeing the massive improvement Ran Xiaoxiao has made under your guidance, how could I possibly hold myself back from giving it a try...

In the end, of the three geniuses who came to challenge Zhang shi, two of them were lying on the ground, frothing at the lips, while the last one was completely obedient to him. Huang Xing and the others couldn't help but gape at that sight.

This was way too exaggerated!

The second, third, and fourth rankers of the Annual Tournament had come to challenge him. Yet, with just a few words from their opponents, they ended up turning against one another, eventually landing them in utter defeat...

They couldn't help but doubt the authenticity of the sight before them. Was this a show they had cooked up to toy with them, or were they just dreaming?

It was fortunate that they hadn't offended Zhang shi earlier! Otherwise, the ones who would be lying on the ground at this moment might be them!

It was no wonder by Elder Mo would direct him to the Elite Sector personally, he did possess the talent worthy of that!

At the same time, Ran Xiaoxiao was staring at the sight before her in a daze. It seemed as if she could hardly believe that the rivals whom she wasn't able to overcome in the past few years could be defeated so easily.

"Alright, I'll be leaving the rest to you all then..."

With Zhang Xuan's current Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle cultivation, it would be almost bullying if he were to make a move on these Grade 1 students. It would be damaging to his reputation if word were to spread out, so he had opted to have Ran Xiaoxiao fight in his place instead.

With this, there should be no one else in the Grade 1 who would oppose his occupation of the first residence. With nothing else tying him here, he waved his hand casually and walked toward the residence.

Pushing open the door to the residence, he immediately felt a surge of spiritual energy blew past him.

The residence was extremely large. On top of the usual amenities, there was even a personal training ground in the courtyard and a sealed chamber for discussing important matters. Honestly speaking, it seemed more like a manor than a residence.

It was no wonder the trio had wanted this residence. The privileges granted to the top of the grade was indeed incredible.

After taking a casual look around the residence, Zhang Xuan didn't dive straight into cultivating. Instead, he took a seat in one of the rooms to contemplate on his next course of action.

There were a total of ten schools representing an occupation each in this academy, and each of them had a humongous library containing a precious trove of knowledge. It wasn't easy for Zhang Xuan to enroll into the academy, so he should make use of the opportunity to tour the academy and learn everything he could.

By the time he was done, he should be ready to take on the 6-star master teacher examination.

Only upon becoming a 6-star master teacher would one be considered to have taken one's first step into the world of the top experts in the Master Teacher Continent. This was an essential step for Zhang Xuan to gain the power to protect himself and those around him.

"But before then, I have to find higher tier cultivation technique manuals first!"

Zhang Xuan's Heaven's Path Divine Art was only up to Cosmos Bridge realm at the moment. To advance to Perfect Harmonization realm, he would have to gather even more cultivation technique manuals to compile a complete Heaven's Path Divine Art for that cultivation realm.

"The cultivation techniques are gathered in the Cultivation Hall!"

Zhang Xuan recalled the words Luo Qiqi had told him on the journey here.

Gathered in the Cultivation Hall was the reflection and comprehension notes and cultivation technique manuals that countless geniuses had left behind over the years.

As long as he could gain entry into the Cultivation Hall, he would surely be able to compile a complete Perfect Harmonization realm Heaven's Path Divine Art!

Or if luck would permit it, perhaps even beyond that!

"However, the prerequisite to viewing the Perfect Harmonization realm cultivation technique manuals in the Cultivation Hall is for one to be a 5-star master teacher, and an adequate amount of Academic Credits! For the time being... I should first try to become a 5-star master teacher first!"

Despite the sea of knowledge hidden within the Cultivation Hall, there was a price for its entry.

As a 4-star master teacher, Zhang Xuan was only qualified to view the Consonant Spirit realm and Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation technique manuals at the moment. The Perfect Harmonization realm cultivation technique manuals were currently beyond his reach.

And more importantly, in the first place, he would need some Academic Credits to enter the Cultivation Hall.

Naturally, he had no Academic Credits having just enrolled in the academy. He would only be turned away at the entrance even if he were to head for the Cultivation Hall.

"To qualify for the 5-star master teacher examination, I would need five 5-star supporting occupation, and at the moment, the only occupation that I have at that rank is appraiser. It seems like I'll need to prepare a bit before taking the examination... How troublesome!" Zhang Xuan rubbed in glabella in frustration.

For each advancement in one's master teacher rank, one would have to take on another supporting occupation while raising the ranks of all supporting occupation to the corresponding master teacher rank.

Too often were there master teachers who were hindered not by their cultivation, but their inability to bring up the required number of supporting occupations to the required rank to be promoted.

So far, the only 5-star supporting occupation Zhang Xuan had was appraiser. As for the remaining supporting occupations, formation master, physician, painter, and beast tamer were at 4-star, while apothecary was at 3-star.

While Zhang Xuan had other supporting occupations such as poison master and soul oracle, those occupations were often frowned upon due to their history and their nature, and he might be shunned for learning their skills. Thus he wouldn't be able to consider them for his promotion prerequisites.

"I should pay a visit to the other schools while I have the time to take the examinations for my supporting occupations!"

After some contemplation on the matter, Zhang Xuan thought that it would be better for him to take things a step at a time.

He wasn't in a rush for time anyway, and the academy provided a convenient platform for him to take the examinations as well. If he could clear as many examinations as he could here, he could be spared the trouble from trying to find the occupation guilds in the future.

"I have managed to compile the Heaven's Path Smith Art recently but I haven't gotten a chance to take the examination yet. Perhaps I should take the examination for it first..."

Eventually, Zhang Xuan decided to visit the Blacksmith School first.

Through compiling the books Wu Yangzi had left behind, his current smithing proficiency could be said to be on par, or even superior to a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith. Thus, he could take the 6-star blacksmith examination straight without a problem.

At the same time, this was a good opportunity for him to get a view on the capability of the Blacksmith School.

With this thought in mind, Zhang Xuan stood up without hesitation and walked out of his residence.

By the time he stood out, Wu Chan and the others had already left.

After all, as seniors in the school, it was indeed embarrassing for them to remain here after losing to a freshman.

Zhang Xuan went back to the massive building and swiftly found Huang Xing and the others. From them, he got the location of the Blacksmith School, and swiftly made his way over.

Of the ten schools, the Blacksmith School was second only to the Apothecary School. There were many students who took it as their supporting occupation, and even when he was a distance away, he could already see a huge crowd moving to and fro the area.

"Perfect Harmonization realm, Ethereal Treading realm..."

Zhang Xuan gauged the cultivation of the crowd by sweeping through them with his Eye of Insight.

There were plenty of students who had reached Perfect Harmonization realm and Ethereal Treading realm among the crowd, and there was even a handful who had reached Chrysalis realm.

With such strength, they would stand unchallenged in Huanyu Empire. Even in Hongyuan Empire, they stood amongst the top.

As expected of the Blacksmith School, it was indeed incredible.

After asking around, Zhang Xuan soon found the area where

blacksmith examinations were held.

The schools in the Master Teacher Academy were associated with the respective occupation guilds, so the results of the examinations held here were officially recognized.

In other words, by clearing the blacksmith examination here, he could receive an official emblem from the Blacksmith Guild.

Considering how there were nearly a hundred thousand master teachers in the academy, if they had to head out to their respective guilds to take the examination, not only would it be a huge inconvenience to the master teachers, it would also be a great burden on the guilds in the vicinity as well.

Thus, the occupations had decided to set up a branch within the respective schools to oversee the examination so as to make things convenient.

"Blacksmith Guild—Hongyuan Academy Branch..."

Zhang Xuan glanced at the plaque hung in front of a towering building before walking in.

The vast lounge was filled bustling with a huge crowd. Zhang Xuan estimated that there was probably at least a few hundred people in here.

"Tailor-made Spirit intermediate-tier weapon from a 5-star blacksmith, priced at only half an Academic Credit!"

"I have a Spirit intermediate-tier saber fresh from the forge, going at just one Academic Credit! Don't miss this opportunity, you won't see another weapon as cheap as this..."

"I'm lacking a Goldenforest Ore, and I am willing to trade two Academic Credits for it!"

"Three Searing Blaze Stones, going at one Academic Credit each..."

...

It was as if Zhang Xuan had leaped into a market. Some were offering weapon forging services, some were selling their forged weapons, some were buying all kinds ores, and some were selling all kind of smithing resources.

Since most of them were dressed in a master teacher robe, they should be students of the academy.

"The purchasing power of Academic Credits sure is amazing..." After taking a look around the stores, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but notice that most trades were conducted using Academic Credits.

When Zhang Xuan first heard about the importance of Academic Credits from Luo Qiqi, he had thought that its price would, at best, be equivalent to middle-tier spirit stones. However, perhaps due to the fact that Academic Credits were essential in accessing most facilities in the Master Teacher Academy, its value seemed to be comparable to even high-tier spirit stones.

It was no wonder why Luo Qiqi and the others had gone all the way to Huanyu Empire to search for Wu Yangzi's underground chamber for just a handful of Academic Credits. It seemed like it wasn't easy to earn Academic Credits at all. Otherwise, 5-star blacksmiths wouldn't have to go to the extent of setting up stores as if roadside vendors.

The items they were offering would be invaluable treasures back in Huanyu Empire, but they weren't even worth half an Academic Credit in here.

"Is there anything you need?"

After squeezing through the crowd to reach the reception desk with much difficulty, Zhang Xuan found a young lady smiling at him.

Through asking around, Zhang Xuan learned that the receptionists were also the students of the academy as well. They

had accepted this mission from the academy to earn Academic Credits.

While such missions were humble, they were neither dangerous nor skill-based, so it was more suited for the less-skilled students.

"I wish to take the blacksmith examination!" Zhang Xuan said.

"May I know what rank are you going for? I'll make arrangements for you right now!" Upon hearing that the young man before her was going to take the blacksmith examination, the young lady's eyes immediately lit up.

"I'll... take the 5-star examination!" After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan replied.

If the examination was knowledge-based, it wouldn't be a trouble for him to pass the 6-star examination. However, that was very unlikely to be the case.

Considering his lacking proficiency in smithing, as well as his lacking cultivation, the products he could smith would likely be unflattering.

Thus, he decided to play it safe and take the 5-star examination first. In any case, his current goal was to advance to become a 5-star master teacher for the time being anyway.

"5-star?"

The lady nodded with a smile and said, "May I have your 4-star emblem and your student token? I'll help you register for the examination..."

"Emblem? Student token?" Zhang Xuan's face reddened in embarrassment. "I don't have any of those yet..."

Zhang Xuan had never taken the blacksmith examination before, so he didn't even have a 1-star emblem. On the other hand, as a freshman who had just entered the academy a few hours ago, his name wasn't even listed in the academy's records yet. How could

he possibly have a student token on hand?

"You don't have those?"

The young lady froze for an instant before her smile vanished into a frown, "Who are you then? What are you doing at our Master Teacher Academy?"

Chapter 730 The Importance of Academic Credits

Anyone without a student token couldn't be considered as a student of their academy... If that was the case, who in the world was the young man before her?

As one of the very few major academies under Qingyuan Conferred Empire that served as a cradle for aspiring master teachers, only those who possessed superior talent or capabilities were allowed to step onto its premises.

"I am a freshman from this year's batch... I just entered the academy, so I haven't received by student token yet!" Realizing that the other party had misunderstood that he was an outsider, Zhang Xuan hurriedly explained.

"A freshman?" The young lady was stunned for an instant before it dawned on her that the entrance examination was just held earlier today. She couldn't help but shake her head.

To think that a freshman would visit the Blacksmith School on his very first day in the middle of the night instead of resting...

"I'll be honest with you. To take the blacksmith examination, you'll require a student token, the corresponding emblem, and academic credits. Without academic credits, no one will bother going through the trouble of preparing the examination for you!"

Upon realizing that Zhang Xuan was a freshman, the young lady explained.

"I'll require academic credit for this as well?" A bitter smile crept onto Zhang Xuan's lips.

"Of course. Even if you were to take the examination in the guilds outside the academy, you will still need to place spirit stones with the guild as a deposit. If there's nothing on the line, there would surely be a few who would come to try their luck every day,

wasting the efforts of those preparing the examinations and the resources of the Master Teacher Academy!" the young lady harrumphed.

For a freshman to attempt to take the examination without even getting a clear idea of how the academy's system works, was he just that brazen or simply negligent?

"This..." Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

She was right.

Under normal circumstances, if one wanted to take an examination in a guild, one would have to place a fixed deposit with the guild first, and it would only be returned if one clears the examination. This served as a barrier to deter the arrogant and those trying their luck.

The Master Teacher Academy seemed to follow the same policy as well, just that instead of a deposit of spirit stones, it was Academic Credits now.

"How many Academic Credits will I require to take the 5-star blacksmith examination?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"To take a 5-star supporting occupation examination will typically take two Academic Points whereas a 6-star examination will require four Academic Points." the lady replied.

"Two points?" Zhang Xuan was dumbstruck. "May I also clarify another issue? In other guilds, the deposit will be returned if one were to clear the examination. Does this apply here as well?"

Having walked around the Blacksmith School, he had roughly grasped how difficult it was to earn Academic Credits. Considering how even smithing a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon for another might not even be worth half an Academic Credit, two points was indeed an astronomical sum!

It would be great if he could claim a refund if he were to clear the examination. Otherwise, he would surely have to spend a huge

amount of Academic Credits to clear the necessary examinations required for him to become a 5-star master teacher.

"Refund? How could the Academic Credits possibly be refunded?" the young lady shook her head upon hearing Zhang Xuan's words.

"Just remember this; in order to live in the academy, possessing Academic Credits is a must. In here, no other currency is more useful than Academic Credits. To earn Academic Credits, you will have to clear missions, complete tasks, or break existing records! Alright, you should return for now. I might still be able to give you some leeway regarding your lack of a student token since you are a student of our Master Teacher Academy, but without Academic Credits, you won't be able to even activate the [Ocean of Weapons] to take the examination."

"Activate the Ocean of Weapons?"

"The Ocean of Weapons is an artifact crafted in a collaboration between the Blacksmith School and Celestial Designer School to automate examinations. Once activated, the examinee will be brought into a simulation, where he would craft a weapon through a puppet. As long as his crafted weapons meet the requirements, he would be considered to have cleared the examination." Even though the young lady was starting to get impatient at this point, she still answered Zhang Xuan's query politely.

"Simulation? Puppet? Wouldn't a practical examination where one undergoes the entire smithing process be a more accurate indicator of skill?" Zhang Xuan asked curiously.

Most guilds that he had been would demand the examinees to display their true prowess. Thus, he couldn't help but be a little bewildered when the other party mentioned simulation and puppets.

Could it be that one didn't need to smith a weapon for real to clear the examination?

"It would indeed be a better indicator of skill if one could undergo the entire smithing process, but do you know how expensive are the materials required for smithing are? Of the hundred thousand master teachers in the academy, there are at least fifty thousand of them who have smithing as their supporting occupation. If we were to have each of them smith a real weapon, how much valuable ores and metals would be wasted?" the young lady harrumphed.

"However, you need not worry, While it is an illusion, you will be ranked based on the data we gathered from several hundred 6-star pinnacle blacksmiths ever since the inception of the academy. As long as the core of your smithing aligns with theirs, you will surely clear the examination! The disparity in results would only be at most one in a billion!"

While it was true that the Ocean of Weapons was a smithing simulation, it had been refined by innumerable 6-star blacksmiths over the years, making extremely life-like. As long as one could successfully smith a weapon inside the simulation, they would surely be able to succeed in real life as well, and vice-versa.

"I see!" Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

Indeed. Considering how there were fifty thousand blacksmiths in the academy, there would at least be a thousand who would take the examinations each year. If the academy were to conduct a real practical examination for each of them, how much precious ores and metals would they waste each year?

It was one thing if they had passed and forged a decent weapon, but considering the success ratio over the years, it was likely that most of the ores and metals would be ruined. No matter how wealthy the Master Teacher Academy was, this was an expense they couldn't afford to bear.

Furthermore, unlike medicinal herbs, ores and metals were depletable resources. As such, no blacksmith would be willing to

see so much precious resources going to waste as well each year.

As such, the Master Teacher Academy decided to develop a simulation to conduct the examinations instead.

"Alright, you should return now. Even if you do possess the capability to pass the 5-star blacksmith examination, you will still need two Academic Credits. Without that, I won't be able to give you any leeway even if I wanted to!" the young lady waved Zhang Xuan away.

"If I recall correctly, you said that to earn Academic Credits, we can either clear missions, complete tasks, or... break existing records? May I know how does breaking the existing records work?" Knowing that he would be unable to do anything without sufficient Academic Credits, Zhang Xuan continued asking.

"Break existing records?" The young lady's eyes began flying around the place, and blood nearly gushed from her mouth.

Probably only a freshman like the other party would dare to spout such arrogant words!

Those achievements were termed as "records" for a reason—there was no master teacher in the academy who could surpass it.

As a freshman, it is understandable for you to lack knowledge about the functioning of the academy, so I explained them to you patiently. But now, you are telling me that you intend to break existing records to earn Academic Credits?

You must be dreaming!

If Academic Credits could be earned that easily, why would the others go through so much trouble of setting up their own store?

Seriously, shouldn't there be a limit to your naivety?

"Indeed. May I know what records are there? I would like to try challenging them..." Zhang Xuan replied.

Missions would likely be more troublesome to deal with, or else a

request wouldn't be made for it... As for tasks, Zhang Xuan hadn't been acquainted with any teacher yet, so that would be out of question. Thus, the only remaining option for him to earn Academic Credits quickly was to break records.

Of course, he would try to pick out the easier ones to earn some points first. For the harder ones, he could attempt them later, after he browses through the library.

As the saying goes, money makes the downfall of a hero. Without Academic Credits, even if he possesses superior capability, he would still find his activities severely restricted in the Master Teacher Academy.

"You..." Seeing the fellow before her going on and on about breaking records, the young lady shook her head in displeasure.

Do you know even understand why they are called records? Do you honestly think that you can surpass them just because you want to?

Initially, the young lady was still thinking that this freshman was diligent, rushing to the Blacksmith School right after clearing the entrance examination, and she respected him for it. That was the reason why she chose to answer his queries patiently. However, as the fellow before her got more and more arrogant, she found her patience swiftly wearing thin, and hostility was beginning to take its place.

Nevertheless, she tried her best to rein in her fury as she gestured casually, "If you wish to give it a try, so be it. The Passageway of Records is over there, feel free to take a look. However, allow me to give you a word of advice. Don't enter any of them easily, or else you might be thrown out of the Blacksmith School..."

These records represented the achievements of the talented predecessors of the Blacksmith School, and they were a symbol of honor. Challenging these records without the capability to back it up could be considered as a sign of disrespect to these predecessors,

and one would be severely punished for it.

Furthermore, being humiliated was just one matter, but one could potentially be severely injured while challenging those records if one wasn't sufficiently strong.

"Over there?" Zhang Xuan glanced at the direction where the young lady was gesturing toward, but his view was obstructed by a huge crowd moving to and fro the area.

"I am free now, so allow me to lead you over..." With a proud harrumph, the young lady raised her head and led the way.

Since you spoke so arrogantly about breaking the records, let's see how you will make a fool out of yourself then!

As a freshman, it was one thing for you to be ambitious. However, to declare so proudly that you would break the existing records of the Blacksmith School, who do you think you are?

If it was that easy to do so, why do you think there would be people here offering their services to smith weapons or selling their work? Why do you think students would go through all the trouble, braving through life-and-death situations to clear difficult missions?

Of all of the conceited men I have seen, you top the list!

The fellow before her was most likely a high-flyer from some rural area who had never ventured into the greater world. Accustomed to being the top, he naturally thought of himself as superior to others, not knowing that his outlook was merely like a frog in a well.

Oblivious to the fact that he had already left a terrible impression on the lady before him, Zhang Xuan followed behind her closely through the crowd.

Before long, he found himself standing before a black door.

This door somewhat resembled those he saw during his 2-star

master teacher examination in Tianwu Kingdom. There were words written on the white wall beside the door:

"Melting three Black Crystal Ore in ten minutes. Accomplished by 6-star Blacksmith Zheng Rong in the 3784th year of the establishment of Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy..."

"Diverting the earth flames to completely melt a lump of Glacier Silver within two hours. Accomplished by 6-star Blacksmith..."

"Withstanding the heat within the Chamber of Earth Flame for 17 minutes. Accomplished by 6-star Blacksmith Liu Han..."

...

These were the records set by the predecessors of Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and the details of whom and when it was achieved was written on it as well.

After taking a casual glance, Zhang Xuan's face gradually turned grim.

To be honest, these records were indeed incredible even from his point of view.

Taking just the Black Crystal Ore for example, this object was known to be one of the hardest ores to process. Even a typical 7-star blacksmith would require at least an hour to melt it down, but the record holder Zheng Rong actually managed to do it within ten minutes! That was an astounding feat!

Even Zhang Xuan, with his current cultivation realm, would be unable to do the same!

This was even more so for Glacier Silver. This material known to be impossible to be melted through normal flames. The only way to forge a weapon out of it was to soften it by exposing it to earth flames for a prolonged period of time and slowly mold it into a weapon. Generally speaking, such a process would take several months, and yet, the record holder had managed to melt it down into liquid metal within two hours!

"So, do you think you can rival their achievements?" Glancing at the arrogant young fellow beside her, the young lady scoffed.

"It's not impossible... but it'll be troublesome!" Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

If he were to really set his mind to it, he was confident of surpassing those records. However, he would have to pay a hefty price for it as well. The price he had to pay wasn't worth that bit of Academic Credits.

Taking Glacier Silver for example, as long as he were to infuse his Heaven's Path zhenqi into the earth flame to intensify the heat, it should be possible for him to melt it fully within an hour... However, the zhenqi he would have to expend to do so would reach a fearsome level.

Furthermore, there was a risk that he might expose the secret regarding his Heaven's Path zhenqi as well. If that were to happen, there would be no doubt that others would attempt to acquire his secret, even at the expense of his life. That was how great the allure of Heaven's Path zhenqi was.

While he had "Yang shi" to keep such people in check, it was still best for him to steer clear of trouble if possible.

"You're saying that you can do break these records? How conceited!" Hearing the conversation the duo had, a blacksmith stepped forward and sneered.

"Li Xuan, where on earth did you find such an arrogant fellow?"

Chapter 731 Chamber of Earth Flame

Zhang Xuan turned around to take a look.

The other party was a young man who seemed to be in his thirties. The brilliant five stars pinned on his chest indicated that he was a 5-star master teacher!

"Senior Luo Yan!"

Upon seeing the young man, the young lady whom the other party had identified as Li Xuan leaped in fright, and she hurriedly bowed her head politely.

"Isn't Senior Luo Yan one of the top ten master teachers in Grade 4? If I recall correctly, he's also one of the top 5-star pinnacle blacksmiths in the Blacksmith School. To utter such haughty words in his presence, that fellow must be asking for a beating!"

"Indeed, that fellow is acting far too frivolously here. This is the Blacksmith School, not a bragging competition. How did such a person even pass the entrance examination in the first place?"

"I have seen most of the famous Grade 1 and Grade 2 students, but his face looks unfamiliar to me."

"He's probably just saying those words to attract attention..."

...

The Passageway of Records represented the pride and achievements of the Blacksmith School. Only the top blacksmiths in the school would dare to gather here and challenge the records. But even so, most of them would come with the intention of challenging themselves, not to surpass the existing records.

After all, the records signified the very pinnacle of the Blacksmith School over its millenniums of existence.

Yet, this fellow came here and declared that "It's not impossible, but it'll be troublesome". Naturally, these words would incur the

displeasure and hostility of the geniuses here.

Even the top blacksmiths of the Academy School dared not to utter such words! It took those geniuses here all they had to not rush up and pummel that arrogant fellow.

"Reporting to senior, he... he is..."

Under the glare of a renowned Grade 4 student, Li Xuan's body trembled uncontrollably in fear, "He's a newly enrolled student, and he's here to take a look around..."

"A freshman?"

Upon hearing that the other party was just a freshman, Luo Yan shook his head in disappointment and fury, "The quality of the students are getting worse and worse with each passing generation! The Passageway of Records symbolizes the blood and sweat of countless predecessors of our Blacksmith School, how can you allow just anyone to enter here and besmirch this place?"

At this point, Luo Yan's eyebrows shot up, and his voice grew sharper, "What are you still waiting for? Scram!"

"Yes..."

Li Xuan swiftly nodded as she tugged Zhang Xuan out with her. However, to her shock, the latter refused to budge. Instead, he turned to Luo Yan with an annoyed expression and questioned, "Are you the head of the Blacksmith School?"

"I'm not..." Taken aback, Luo Yan replied in confusion.

The other students watching the commotion were stumped by Zhang Xuan's abrupt question as well.

"One of the Ten Great Master Teachers?" Zhang Xuan continued asking.

"That's not it either..."

"So, an elder of the Blacksmith School?"

"Of course not... What are you driving at?" Annoyed by Zhang Xuan's persistent questioning, Luo Yan finally snapped.

"If you are neither the head of the Blacksmith School nor one of the Ten Great master Teachers nor an elder of the Blacksmith School, why the heck are you ranting here for?" Zhang Xuan shook his head with a sigh.

Why the heck are you interfering with us if you have no place here?

What a meddlesome fellow you are!

"Ah..."

Li Xuan was still wondering what Zhang Xuan was going to say when she heard those words. Her body began shaking violently, and she nearly fainted from sheer fear.

Do you know who you standing before? How can you speak to him like that?

He's a Grade 4 student, a 5-star high-tier teacher, a Transcendent Mortal 8-dan expert! For a freshman like you to talk back to him like that, aren't you afraid of being pummeled to death?

Everyone else in the Passageway of Records also glanced at one another, their eyes bulging from astonishment.

Arrogant! They had never seen someone as arrogant as this!

Furious, Luo Yan's face turned so red that it looked as if he would erupt at any moment, "What did you say?"

"Nothing much. Just that you should do whatever you have to do, and don't hinder me from earning Academic Credits!"

Couldn't be bothered with the other party, Zhang Xuan turned his attention back to the records around him.

Having read so many books on smithing, his comprehension of the subject had already reached an extremely profound level. It was possible that the head of the Blacksmith School might not

even be a match for him in terms of their understanding of smithing.

The only thing that was lacking was his cultivation.

If only he has reached Saint realm, he would be able to sweep through all of the records easily.

But with his current cultivation... it would be a little troublesome.

"Alright, I'll take this!"

After contemplating for a moment, Zhang Xuan swiftly chose the record he wanted to challenge. He felt that there was a good chance that he could surpass the existing record, so he turned to Li Xuan and asked, "If you don't mind, help me apply for this. I want to challenge this record!"

"Challenge?" Li Xuan froze.

You still want to challenge the records after seeing the existing ones? Do you really think that you can surpass any of these?

The crowd who was watching the commotion also glanced at one another and shook their heads.

After offending a higher grade student, you still want to challenge a record? Did someone knock the sense out of you?

With such a cocky attitude, how did you even pass the master teacher examination and get into this academy on top of that?

"Un, I want to challenge this Chamber of Earth Flame. I'll be depending on you to make the application for me." Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

The Chamber of Earth Flames was a scorching chamber heated by tapping into earth flames. The longer that one can remain in there, the stronger one's physical body is likely to be.

As blacksmiths, it is inevitable that one will be exposed to intense heat. If one doesn't possess a sufficiently strong body, one will

easily lose concentration in the midst of smithing, resulting in misjudgement and mistakes.

As such, a strong physical body that is resistant to heat is imperative for blacksmiths.

The reason why Zhang Xuan chose this over the other challenges was because he had cultivated the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body and tempered his body using earth flame. The underground chamber might be hot, but he was confident of holding on for more than 17 minutes.

As such, it should be easier for him to clear this challenge as supposed to the others.

"Chamber of Earth Flame?"

"Is that fellow a fool? To choose that of everything else... Is he tired of living?"

"I have no idea. Perhaps being a freshman, he doesn't know how fearsome it is!"

"And here I thought he might at least stand a chance. To think that he would be an idiot instead..."

Upon hearing the record which Zhang Xuan wanted to challenge, everyone turned their eyes to him with gazes seeming to suggest that they were staring at a fool.

Even Luo Yan who was so furious that he could kill Zhang Xuan with a single slap widened his eyes in astonishment.

The Chamber of Earth Flame was also known as the Chamber of Obliteration or the Death Record. Over the years, most of those who attempted to challenge this record ended up either dead or crippled.

Putting everything aside, the current record holder, 6-star Blacksmith Liu Han, had managed to survive inside for seventeen minutes, but he ended up searing every single inch of his flesh,

damaging his foundation. Eventually, he died before he even reached 150.

For a Saint, dying at 150 was definitely considered as a premature death.

Luo Yan had also attempted this record himself, but he fled just three minutes after entering.

As for the others, even though they had never experienced it personally, they had also heard of how terrifying it was from the others.

If there was a record on the record which most would want to avoid challenging, this would definitely be ranked at the top of the list!

And yet, that fellow chose that single record which everyone was dying to avoid... Not to mention, he even proudly declared that he could clear the existing record. Has living become that tiresome for you that you have to rush to your death?

"In the Chamber of Earth Flame, flames would sprout from every crook and nanny, making it impossible for you to avoid them at all. Your skin will be seared by blazing heat... Do you want to reconsider your option?" Shocked, Li Xuan hurriedly tried to persuade the young man beside her.

As infuriated she was by that young man, she was still the one who brought him here, and she couldn't possibly watch as he leaps to his death.

"Don't worry, you can go ahead and make arrangements! If I find myself at the limit of my tolerance, I'll immediately leave the chamber." Knowing that the other party was worried about him, Zhang Xuan replied.

"This..." Seeing Zhang Xuan's insistence, Li Xuan realized that she would be unable to change his mind, so she could only give in, "Alright then. Actually, there's no need to apply for anything

beforehand. All you have to do is to place your palm against the door, and after stepping in, declare which is the record you wish to challenge, and the mechanism will send you to your destination!"

Zhang Xuan nodded, "Thank you!"

Leaving these words behind, he walked up to the door leading to the Chamber of Earth Flame.

"Freshman, what is your name?" Seeing that the fellow was insistent on entering the chamber, Luo Yan harrumphed. "If you can survive three minutes in there, I can overlook your prior disrespectful behavior!"

Even though Zhang Xuan had acted extremely arrogantly, he did feel a slight bit of respect for him for being willing to challenge the Chamber of Earth Flames even after knowing how terrifying it was.

"My name is Zhang Xuan!" Zhang Xuan replied with a slight smile as he placed his palm on the door.

Jiya! The door to the chamber opened, and he walked in.

Upon entering the chamber, the doors behind him immediately closed, plunging the surroundings into darkness.

"I will challenge the Chamber of Earth Flame!" Zhang Xuan declared.

Jiya!

As soon as he spoke those words, the ground beneath him rumbled as a mechanism came to life.

There were various overlaps between in the skills of a blacksmith and a celestial engineer. As such, the two schools were particularly close to one another. This pasasgeway—or perhaps it might be more appropriate to call it a lift—seemed to be installed with an extremely profound mechanism, allowing it to process human speech and transport the challenger to his destination.

A moment later, the rumbling came to a halt.

Darkness veiled the entire area, leaving it impossible for Zhang Xuan to determine where he was. Nevertheless, based on the echoes in the area, it seemed like he had arrived in a massive chamber.

Just as he was about to activate his Eye of Insight to perceive his surroundings, a bundle of flames abruptly lit up before him. It swiftly grew into a blazing flame that spread across the entire chamber. A furious surge of heat wave gushed at him, threatening to burn his skin to crisp.

"Hot!" Zhang Xuan exclaimed with a grim expression.

He thought that the Chamber of Earth Flame would at most be as warm as the flames in the Cleansing Lake. If there was any lava, he could even dive in and attempt to absorb the spiritual energy within it while tempering his body. But it seemed like he had underestimated the difficulty of this task!

His surroundings were raging with a roaring blaze. It was already taking his entirety to maintain a layer of zhenqi to ward off the flames, so how could he possibly cultivate under such circumstances?

At this moment, he felt as if he had been stuffed into an oven. If he were to stop the circulation of his zhenqi, he might find himself well done.

It was no wonder why the others had shot him looks of sympathy when he chose to challenge this record, it was indeed worthy of the fearsome reputation it held!

"If this were to continue, I might not be able to even sustain for two minutes!" Zhang Xuan frowned as he drove his zhenqi to fend off the searing heat.

He thought that this would be a walk in the park for him, especially since he had mastered the First Incandescence of the

Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, but it wasn't as easy as he thought it out to be.

Even with his Heaven's Path zhenqi, he couldn't sustain himself too long in here.

"Something is weird here. Normal earth flames shouldn't be this hot!"

Such a thought plagued Zhang Xuan's mind.

Normal earth flames, even those buried deep within the lava, should be tolerable for him, given his Transcendent Mortal 6-dan pinnacle cultivation and Heaven's Path zhenqi. He should be able to swim in there freely without being burnt.

There was something particularly unnatural about the earth flame before him.

At this temperature, his physical body wasn't the only thing that was being seared. Even his soul was being damaged by the unbelievable heat.

"If it comes down to it, I'll just have my clone take my place while I hide inside the Anthive Nest..." Zhang Xuan thought as he rubbed his glabella.

While the heat was a little beyond him, he didn't have any worry about breaking the record.

As terrifying as the earth flame may be, it wouldn't be able to faze his clone in the least.

However, that would, in some sense, be considered as cheating.

"I should first try to see what's going on in here first."

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan suppressed his urge to swap with his clone, and thin strings began surfacing in his eyes, "Eye of Insight!"

Weng!

Soon, Zhang Xuan realized what was amiss.

"This isn't a natural chamber. The heat seems to be drawn in by a man-made formation, and the formation core is... four Searing Blaze Stone... No, this isn't Searing Blaze Stone but..." After gazing at the depths of the flames for a moment, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up, and his body began to tremble in agitation.

"Earth Flame Heart!"

Chapter 732 Second Incandescence

Earth Flame Heart is an ore formed at the very core of the earth flames after several thousand years of refinement and tempering. It contains an incomparable quantity of fire energy, and if an ordinary cultivator were to just touch it, they would be scalded.

Usually, 6-star blacksmiths would use it as a coal to process ores which are exceptionally resistant to heat. Who could have thought that it would be used as a core to the formation of this Chamber of Earth Flame?

Under his Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan could see the incredible profoundness of the formation before him. It was crafted in a manner that allowed it to take in spiritual energy from the surroundings to sustain the emanation of heat from the Earth Flame Heart.

As such, despite the passing of many years, the Earth Flame Heart was still brimming with power.

"It would be cheating if I were to stop the formation... I should try to break the record openly instead!" Zhang Xuan thought after studying the formation for a moment.

Even though the formation was extremely complex, he could still stop it very easily.

Once he were to do so, the heat in the chamber would recede, allowing him to remain here as long as he could.

Just that, if he were to do so, he might be placed under the suspicion of cheating, and the Blacksmith School might not recognize his accomplishment if they were to notice it. After all, the main motive behind this challenge was to gauge the resilience of one's physical body, not to test one's ability to stop a formation.

Besides, did he really have to go that far as to cheat for a mere record?

Was he such a person?

"This will be useful to my Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body!" Zhang Xuan muttered with a smile on his lips.

The reason why he was delighted upon seeing the Earth Flame Heart wasn't due to him finding the core of the formation but that it was one of the materials required for the cultivation of the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body's Second Incandescence!

Back then, when he was in the underground chamber, he had merged the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body with many other physical body cultivation techniques he had obtained from Luo Qiqi. While he did manage to compile a complete Heaven's Path cultivation technique, it still had four flaws with it, each corresponding from the Second Incandescence to the Fifth Incandescence!

The flaw for the Second Incandescence was that he would require Earth Flame Heart to successfully cultivate it.

However, Earth Flame Heart was an extremely rare material that could hardly be found anywhere. Thus, Zhang Xuan could only stop right after the First Incandescence. However, since he had encountered it here, how could he possibly allow this opportunity to slip past his fingers?

Since the First Incandescence had boosted his physical body strength to 4,000,000 ding, would it be the same for the Second Incandescence as well?

"Let me give it a try!"

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan immediately dived into action. Dissipating the layer of zhenqi he had been using to protect his body, he opened up all of the pores in his body and began to absorb the spiritual energy from the surroundings furiously.

If it had been anyone else, even they had cultivated the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body as well, they wouldn't dare to behave

so rashly, especially when they didn't know where the Earth Flame Heart was.

However, Zhang Xuan was different. Possessing both the Eye of Insight and Library of Heaven's Path, the flaws of the chamber would literally appear before him. He could easily tell which regions were suitable for cultivating, allowing him to absorb the spiritual energy from the flames without hurting his own body.

Activating the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, Zhang Xuan positioned himself in a sitting position above the center of the room with the four Earth Flame Hearts directed accurately at four acupoints in his body. With a massive inhalation, the flames in the surroundings began gushing into his body as though fire dragons ascending to the skies.

Pilipala!

Under the intense heat of the fire dragons, his muscles and bones began emitting loud cracking noises. At the same time, his face swiftly flushed crimson, and he clenched his fists tightly in agony.

Flawed cultivation techniques were indeed far more difficult to cultivate. Putting everything aside, just for this Second Incandescence, not only did he require the Earth Flame Heart, his body would also undergo immense pain as it was tempered by the flames.

If not for his strong mental resilience and soul, he might have fainted at this very instant.

Gugugu!

Nevertheless, despite the intense pain, the effects of the tempering was apparent. His physical body which had already reached an extremely stable state and was difficult to further strengthen was changing at a visible pace. Its stamina, durability, defense... every aspect of his body was being reinforced.

4,000,000 ding!

4,500,000 ding!

5,000,000 ding!

6,000,000 ding!

...

Time swiftly passed, and before long, he had already reached 8,000,000 ding!

At 8,000,000 ding, his physical strength was already comparable to a Perfect Harmonization realm primary stage expert!

In other words, just in terms of physical strength he could draw from his body, he could fight on equal grounds with a Perfect Harmonization realm expert. If he were to utilize his zhenqi and soul cultivation on top of that, he could match even an Ethereal Treading expert!

The enhancement he had received was indeed frightening!

Hu!

Breathing out a mouthful of turbid air, Zhang Xuan slowly descended to the ground.

With this, he had successfully cultivated the Second Incandescence of his Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body!

For the Third Incandescence, he would require Origin Heavy Water as a catalyst. Thus, he could only stop at this point.

"After cultivating the Second Incandescence, the heat here is no longer able to faze me..." Zhang Xuan thought as he glanced at his surroundings quietly.

With the advancement of his Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, not only was his physical strength enhanced, his body had also become immune to the heat emitted by the Earth Flame Heart. While this place could easily burn anyone else to cinders, he could easily lie down in this area and sleep for as long as he could without suffering a burn.

"It seems to be a little too early to leave yet... I need to break the record in order to receive Academic Credits..." Zhang Xuan frowned.

As the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body was a Heaven's Path cultivation technique as well, and he was only cultivating a fifth of it, it was unlikely that too much time had passed during his cultivation. Even though he didn't keep track of the timing, the chances were that he would fail the challenge if he were to leave now.

"Perhaps I can cultivate my soul in here while waiting!"

Since he had no choice but to wait anyway, Zhang Xuan decided to draw his soul out to cultivate.

The reason why the spiritual energy within the Cleansing Lake could be absorbed by his soul was because it had been refined and cleaned by the earth flame beneath it.

On the other hand, a formation augmented by Earth Flame Heart had been set up within this chamber. Under the intense heat, the spiritual energy here had also been refined, making it suitable for a soul to absorb.

Thus, disregarding his physical body, Zhang Xuan's soul floated in the midst of the chamber.

Due to the flaws in the Soul Guiding Formula, soul oracles feared sunlight, flames, and everything that was yang in nature. However, having cultivated the perfected Soul Guiding Formula, Zhang Xuan's soul possessed no such flaws. As a result, despite the overwhelming heat in the surroundings, his soul was still able to fly around freely without suffering any damage.

Even though he only had the Consonant Spirit realm Heaven's Path Soul Art, making it impossible for him to make a breakthrough, he could still absorb spiritual energy to enhance his soul, just like what he did in the Cleansing Lake.

Back then, due to his clone frenziedly wrestling spiritual energy from him, his soul wasn't able to reach ten meters. However, with the spiritual energy within this chamber, he could try to surpass that bottleneck.

Tzzzzzz!

The refined spiritual energy in the area began flowing swiftly towards Zhang Xuan's soul, nourishing it.

"As I expected, it works..." Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up with excitement.

As expected of one of the treasures required in the cultivation of the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body. After many years of refinement under the intense heat of the Earth Flame Heart, the spiritual energy in the surroundings had become far purer than that in the Cleansing Lake, making it the best tonic for his soul!

"This time, I should finish absorbing my share before bringing clone out!"

With the prior experience at the Cleansing Lake, Zhang Xuan knew that his absorbing speed would surely be unable to compete with his clone, so he decided to take in whatever he could first before bringing that fellow out.

...

While Zhang Xuan was busy absorbing the spiritual energy in the chamber, there was a huge mess outside the chamber.

At this point, it had already been two hours since Zhang Xuan had entered the Chamber of Earth Flame.

Everyone thought that the fellow would leap out after a minute or two, but time continued to tick on, and before they knew it, it was already two hours... For there to be no signs of him after so long, had he already died in there?

"The mechanism in the Chamber of Earth Flame has the ability to

detect the presence of life. If the challenger of the record were to pass away, he would immediately be sent back out..." Luo Yan frowned in confusion.

He had once challenged the Chamber of Earth Flame, so he had studied up on it and knew a fair bit about its inner working.

As soon as the mechanism detects the lack of presence of any life in the chamber, it would immediately deport the challenger back to the Passageway of Records.

Considering how that fellow hadn't been deported after such a long period of time, it could only mean that... he was still alive and kicking!

Did that fellow really enter the Chamber of Earth Flame?

Could he have run off to some other challenge to slack about?

Otherwise, to last for two whole hours... was this even possible?

And the truth was that he wasn't the only one who was getting frenzied over this matter. The others who had gathered around after hearing Zhang Xuan's arrogant declaration were also clutching their hair in madness.

Most record challengers would just aim to beat the record for a few seconds, or even at most, just a minute or two. After all, these records were made by the predecessors by pushing their bodies to the very limit. Yet, to surpass it by severalfold and still remain within... Was he planning to remain in there for days?

"The heat from the Chamber of Earth Flame is capable of melting even steel, and to stay there for two hours..." Luo Yan subconsciously swallowed a mouthful of saliva as he turned to Li Xuan.

"Are you certain that he's a freshman?"

"That's what he told me... I don't think he's lying. If he's a senior, we should have heard of him before..." Li Xuan hurriedly replied.

Her lips were also twitching in astonishment from what was going on.

Even though she was serving as the receptionist of the Blacksmith School, she was also a master teacher herself, and she possessed an eye of discernment worthy of one. Based on her judgement, she could tell that Zhang Xuan wasn't feigning his ignorance in their interactions.

For someone who didn't know the slightest thing about the records to challenge it, it was inevitable that she would regard him as arrogant. Who would have known that not only would he actually do it, he would even successfully surpass the existing record?

After all, this was a record which had remained unbroken for countless years!

"To think that I thought that he was being conceited..." Recalling how she had looked at the other party disdainfully, her face couldn't help but turn red in embarrassment.

That fellow did have the capability to back up his words!

Yet, her eyes failed to see through it...

"Freshman..."

On the other hand, having received the confirmation from Li Xuan, Luo Yan's eyelids began twitching.

All along, he had been proud of his record of remaining in the Chamber of Earth Flame for three minutes, and he had been bragging about it over the years. Due to it, he had won the admiration of respect of many. Yet, he actually mocked the person who had been inside for two hours and longer...

It would be difficult for even the Ten Great Master Teachers to break the seventeen minutes mark, needless to say, two hours!

Upon thinking of this, he couldn't help but feel a stinging

sensation on his face.

"Senior, the Chamber of Earth Flame is incredibly dangerous. No matter how resilient Zhang Shi's physical body is, it should be impossible for him to remain in there for so long. Could something have happened to him?" After waiting for a moment later, a master teacher suddenly spoke up.

Records were records for a reason. To surpass them was already an incredible feat in itself, but to do so with a gap of severalfold was unthinkable!

"Un, I also find the situation inconceivable... Wait for me here, I'll go and look for my teacher to ask him about this matter. Given how knowledgeable he is, he should be able to figure out what is going on." Luo Yan replied after a moment of hesitation.

With those words, he walked out of the Passageway of Records and soon, he arrived before a room.

"Teacher!" Luo Yan called out as he knocked on the door.

"Luo Yan? What's wrong?" The elder in the room raised his gaze and asked.

The vice-head of the Blacksmith School, Yuan Hong!

A 6-star pinnacle master teacher and blacksmith, his standing within the Blacksmith School was second only to the school head.

"Reporting to teacher, someone is currently challenging the Chamber of Earth Flame!" Luo Yan reported anxiously.

"Chamber of Earth Flame? The existing record of seventeen minutes has left many helpless in its face. It won't be easy for anyone to surpass that!" Yuan Hong remarked with a smile as he stroked his beard.

"Who is it? Lu Wu? Chen Hai? Or is it Du Jiu? The quality of the students in the Blacksmith School has been going down with each passing generation. In the current generation, they are the only

ones who stand a chance for that record!"

Chapter 733 You Still Have the Cheek to Ask for Academic Credits

The students whom Yuan Hong listed were the top geniuses of the Blacksmith School, possessing capability surpassing Luo Yan.

Smithing required one to temper their bodies, but only a handful was willing to tolerate the painful process. As a result, there were very few capable blacksmiths in the Blacksmith School.

This had always been a thorn at Yuan Hong's heart, so upon hearing that someone was challenging the Chamber of Earth Flame, he couldn't help but lament.

"It isn't them, it's a freshman named Zhang Xuan!" Luo Yan hurriedly replied.

"A freshman?" Yuan Hong was stunned by the news.

"Yes, he has just passed the examination and joined the academy today, and he doesn't even have his student token yet... It seems like he hopes to earn some Academic Credits from beating the records so that he could activate the Ocean of Weapons to take the 5-star blacksmith examination..." Luo Yan explained.

"Preposterous!" Yuan Hong bellowed in fury upon hearing that a freshman who hadn't even received his student token actually went to challenge one of the records.

As the vice-head of the Blacksmith School, he was in charge of upholding discipline amongst the students. How could a freshman who had just barely joined the academy be allowed to challenge the Chamber of Earth Flame? Wasn't that practically suicide?

Does he even know what does the Chamber of Earth Flame represents?

"Even if others don't comprehend it, surely you should understand the significance of this matter! The Chamber of Earth

Flame takes a huge toll on one's physical body. As a freshman who has never gone through the systematic training of our Blacksmith School, how could he possibly survive in there?"

The more Yuan Hong spoke, the more livid his face became.

"Teacher..." Luo Yan tried to speak up, but he was interrupted before he could start explaining himself.

"Alright, you are just a student, so you can't be blamed for this. If someone were to insist on challenging the records, you don't have the authority to stop them anyway. I don't mean to blame you by saying all of this, but I am enraged but how arrogant the students are becoming. Honestly, the recent few batches of students are the worst I have ever taught in my entire career..." Yuan Hong sighed.

He knew that it wasn't right for him to vent his anger on his student, so he shook his head and said, "Alright. How long has that fellow been in there? Has he suffered severe burns? Here is a bottle of Clear Spirit Water, it should be able to treat his burns..."

"No. That freshman is still... in the chamber!" Luo Yan finally found a chance to speak up amidst his teacher's words.

Yuan Hong was an excellent teacher, but he had a fatal flaw—he was too naggy.

Due to that, there was not a single student who wouldn't get a headache from his lectures.

"You just have to apply the Clear Spirit Water on his external burns to..." Just as Yuan Hong was starting to explain how the Clear Spirit Water should be used, he suddenly froze, and his eyes began bulging from their sockets. "What did you say? What do you mean by he isn't out yet? When did he enter the chamber?"

"He... entered around two hours ago!" Luo Yan replied.

"Two hours ago?" Yuan Hong's body shook in astonishment, and he nearly blacked out.

"Indeed. I have no idea what's going on, so I came over to report this matter to you..." Luo Yan replied.

"Report? What is the point of reporting it now! How could he possibly last for two hours? Most likely, he was burned to cinders within two seconds after he entered the chamber!" Yuan Hong slammed the table before him furiously and stood up.

What the heck was this?

You should know how severe this matter is, and you choose to report it to me only two hours later?

The Chamber of Earth Flame would deport any corpses back, but if one were to reduced to cinders as soon as they arrive there, the mechanism wouldn't be activated.

Given that there were no movements whatsoever after two hours, it could only mean that the other party was dead.

"There's such a thing as well? I... didn't know..." Luo Yan was taken aback by the revelation.

He only knew that corpses would be deported back immediately, but he didn't know about the matter regarding being burned to ashes.

If that was the case, didn't that mean that the fellow inside was already dead...

"You are still too inexperienced. I have been in this Master Teacher Academy for more than 800 years, so the things I have seen is far more than the books you have read!" Yuan Hong harrumphed.

"I'll follow you over to check out the situation in the Chamber of Earth Flame. Even though it's regretful that a life is lost just like that, he brought it upon himself, acting so arrogantly despite his ignorance..."

However, halfway through Yuan Hong's words, the ground

beneath him suddenly shook, and the sound of something collapsing abruptly rumbled deafeningly.

Boom!

Judging from the sound, it seemed to be coming from the Passageway of Records.

"What's going on?" Astonished, the duo rushed out of the room.

A freshman had just died, and this mess suddenly sprung up on them. What the heck was going on today?

"Bad news, Yuan shi! The Chamber of Earth Flame has collapsed!" A master teacher rushed into the room and reported.

"Collapsed? What do you mean... What collapsed?" Yuan Hong was taken aback.

"It's the Chamber of Earth Flame in the Passageway of Records..." the master teacher hurriedly replied.

Yuan Hong nearly went insane, "How could that be? It is a masterpiece created in a collaboration between the Blacksmith School and the Celestial Designer School, so how in the world did it collapse?"

As a part of the Passageway of Records, the Chamber of Earth Flame was reinforced to the very limits by the combined effort of the Blacksmith School and the Celestial Designer School. Furthermore, it was forged using top-quality materials, so how could it collapse that easily?

Just what was going on?

Standing by the side, Luo Yan's figure also staggered upon hearing that news.

It was just a moment ago that he had reported the issue regarding the Chamber of Earth Flame when such an issue occurred. What was happening inside there?

The master teacher who had charged into the room to report also

seemed to be in disbelief, "I'm not too sure myself as well. I only saw the entire place being reduced to ruins..."

"Let's go over to take a look..."

With twitching lips, Hong Yuan immediately rushed out of the room anxiously, and before long, he was standing right before the Passageway of Records, or at least what it used to be.

At this moment, half of the Passageway of Records had already collapsed, and the entire room was cloaked with dust.

"What happened?" Luo Yan turned to Li Xuan and asked in bewilderment.

"I have no idea either... We were waiting for Zhang shi when a loud rumbling noise suddenly sounded from the Passageway of Records... Before we knew it, it was already like that..." Li Xuan cried tearfully.

She wasn't the only one who was dumbfounded by the situation, the remaining crowd in the area were also frozen in shock.

No one could comprehend why the Passageway of Records, which had always been known for its durability, would abruptly cave in. But if one thing was for sure, considering that the Chamber of Earth Flame was at the very center of it...

"Zhang shi... is probably dead." Luo Yan muttered as he recalled what his teacher said.

However, at that moment, resounding footsteps echoed amidst the dust, and following closely was a series of violent coughing.

"Cough cough..."

Upon hearing the sound, a jolt ran through everyone's body. They swiftly turned their sight to the source of the sound, and an approaching young man came into their vision.

Who else could it be other than Zhang shi!

"Y-y-y-y-you're fine?" Luo Yan's eyes bulged in shock at that

sight, and his body began trembling uncontrollably in agitation.

His teacher had just told him confidently that this fellow would have been burned to cinders by now, and yet here he was, completely unharmed without the slightest burn on his skin...

Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy?

If you are alive, why the hell did you stay in there for two hours? Not to mention, how in the world did you collapse the fortified Chamber of Earth Flame...

Are you a spy who is here to wreak havoc in our Blacksmith School?

"I'm fine!"

At which, Zhang Xuan shot a glance at the ruins remaining of the passageway, and he continued awkwardly, "But it seems like this Passageway of Records... is damaged!"

"Seems?"

Everyone staggered upon hearing Zhang Xuan's words.

Look at the mess behind you, is there even any doubt about this matter? Even a blind man could tell that it's utterly ruined!

"You are the freshman who went in just now?" Forcing himself to calm down, Yuan Hong turned to Zhang Xuan and asked.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Even though he didn't recognize the man before him, the other party harnessed incredible power within him that wouldn't lose out by too far to Elder Mo and Pavilion Master Mo. Most likely, he was an important figure of the Blacksmith School.

"Weren't you trying to challenge the record? What happened?" Yuan Hong questioned.

How in the name of Kong shi did you collapse the Chamber of Earth Flame while challenging the record?

"This... I'm not too sure either. After entering, I realized that the heat from the Chamber of Earth Flame is still tolerable for me, so I started to cultivate while biding my time. Before I knew it... the entire chamber was already collapsing on me!" Zhang Xuan replied with a crimson face.

As a soul oracle, Zhang Xuan was able to draw his soul out to absorb spiritual energy from the surroundings directly. This allowed him to absorb spiritual energy at a far swifter pace than ordinary cultivators, and before long, with a jolt running through his body, his soul had already broken through the ten-meters bottleneck.

However, this was where the calamity started. With the breakthrough, Zhang Xuan's rate of absorption abruptly rose significantly, and the previous absorption had already caused depleted a considerable amount of spiritual energy in the chamber. As a result, the Earth Flame Heart ran out of spiritual energy far quicker than he had imagined.

The Earth Flame Heart was the core of the formation sustaining the Chamber of Earth Flame. Without any spiritual energy to sustain it, how could the formation continue to function normally?

Just like what happened in the Cleansing Lake, the energy in the area which was being regulated by the formation immediately went berserk, and it was only by a great stroke of fortune that an explosion didn't occur.

Nevertheless, the Chamber of Earth Flame began to cave in, and the Passageway of Record which was closely linked to it was affected as well...

It was fortunate that Zhang Xuan had his soul return immediately to his body as soon as he realized something was amiss and used his zhenqi to ward off the collapsing rubble. Otherwise, he might just make history by becoming the first student to die not of heat but of collapsing rubble in the Chamber

of Earth Flame.

Looking at the mess around him, an indescribable feeling of frustration and helplessness gripped Zhang Xuan.

This... All he wanted to do was to break a record and earn some Academic Credits so that he could take the 5-star blacksmith examination. Who could have thought that this innocent desire of his would result in such a tragic accident?

In any case, while he was the culprit behind this incident, he was determined to deny all allegations.

Putting everything aside, just that four Earth Flame Hearts were already way beyond his means to compensate.

As such, the only option he had left was to feign ignorance of the matter.

"It collapsed on you... before you knew it?" Hearing such shameless words, everyone felt faint-headed, and Yuan Hong even staggered weakly.

This Chamber of Earth Flame has been in the Blacksmith School for at least four thousand years by now, and you are the only one of all challengers who encountered such a problem... Did you think that you can wiggle your way out of this just by feigning ignorance?

Even if you were to say these words to a three-year-old child, he wouldn't believe you!

Can you at least show more sincerity and come up with a more believable lie?

"I'll give you one more chance. What happened?" With a livid face, Yuan Hong asked once more.

"After entering the Chamber of Earth Flame, I realized that the searing spiritual energy there happens to be ideal for tempering one's physical body, so I accidentally absorbed too much of it... I

also didn't know that it would collapse just like that..." With a deep sigh, Zhang Xuan could only confess honestly.

"Happens to be ideal for tempering one's physical body? Accidentally absorbed too much of it?" Yuan Hong was speechless.

The others might not know too much about the Chamber of Earth Flame, but as a person who had participated in its reparation works, he knew very well about its inner working. There were four Earth Flame Heart at the center of the formation in the chamber, and each of them harnessed incredibly fiery spiritual energy.

If an ordinary human were to touch it, he would be reduced to ashes in a moment. Even a 6-star blacksmith could be roasted to death from the inside if he were to attempt to absorb the searing spiritual energy inside it... And yet, you actually found it ideal for tempering your physical body, and absorbed too much of it?

How much spiritual energy did you absorb to cause the Chamber of Earth Flame to collapse!?

Just as Yuan Hong was about to interrogate the young man before him further on the issue, the young man suddenly turned to look at him with a hopeful gaze and asked, "I managed to two hours in the Chamber of Earth Flame, so I should have already broken the existing record... So, may I get my Academic Credits now?"

"Academic Credits? You still have the cheek to ask for Academic Credits?" Yuan Hong nearly exploded from rage.

You destroyed the entire Chamber of Earth Flame and collapsed half of the Passageway of Records, and you still have the audacity to speak about Academic Credits? Where is your sense of shame?

Chapter 734 My Teacher, Yang Xuan

"Are you saying that I won't be getting any Academic Credits?" Hearing the other party's words, Zhang Xuan was stunned.

"Of course not!" Yuan Hong flung his sleeves in displeasure. "In order to uphold the integrity of the challenge, the Passageway of Records have a system in place to check if there was any cheating involved. Now that the entire place has collapsed, how can we ensure that you didn't use any artifact inside?"

Naturally, the records must be achieved using one's own capability, and the Passageway of Records had several systems in place to allow others to check on how the challenge went. Otherwise, if one was allowed to use artifacts as they pleased during the challenge, it would become a competition of wealth instead of capability, and the concept of challenging records would become meaningless.

However, given that the entire passageway had been reduced to ruins, it would be impossible to ensure the integrity of the challenge. As such, how could they deem whether one had truly broken the record or not?

Furthermore, you caused such devastating damage to the Blacksmith School right after you arrived. I haven't even talked about the reparation costs yet, and here you are asking me for Academic Credits... You must be kidding me!

"This..." Zhang Xuan was dumbstruck.

He thought that he would be able to obtain Academic Credits since he had already broken the record, but based on the other party's tone, it seemed like it was a hopeless cause.

He had wasted his time this time around.

But at the very least, he did receive something good from the challenge. Not only did he achieved Second Incandescence in the

Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, his soul had also successfully surpassed the ten-meters bottleneck.

"Since I won't be getting any Academic Credits from this, I'll challenge the other records then..." After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan said.

Since he was already at the Blacksmith School, he should at least return with a 5-star blacksmith emblem. Otherwise, wouldn't this be a wasted trip?

"Challenge what? Look at the state of the Passageway of Records! Do you think that you can still challenge any records?" Luo Yan stood up and roared furiously.

How are you going to challenge the other records when the Passageway of Records is already wrecked!

"Then... How can I earn more Academic Credits then?" Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

"The Passageway of Records represents the honor and glory of the Blacksmith School, and yet, you broke it as soon as you arrived. Let me give you a word of advice, don't bother thinking about Academic Credits anymore. Think about how you can compensate for the damages!" Luo Yan gazed at Zhang Xuan in pity.

It took the Celestial Designer School and the Blacksmith School much effort before they managed to craft the Passageway of Records. It had survived the challenge of innumerable students over several millennia, and you destroyed it as soon as you came... Instead of thinking about how you can compensate for what you have done, you are still dreaming of obtaining Academic Credits?

You sure are brazen-faced!

"Compensate?" Zhang Xuan's face twitched. After a moment of hesitation, he asked meekly, "How much?"

Hearing those words, Luo Yan turned to his teacher.

As a student, he didn't have the right to dictate the compensation amount.

"The Chamber of Earth Flame is forged more than four thousand years ago by the head of the Blacksmith School and the head of the Celestial Designer School then. Four Earth Flame Hearts and several other valuable materials were used in its construction. Even if we were to take in the depreciation cost due to damages over time, it would still cost at least twenty high-tier spirit stones!"

After a moment of mental calculation, Yuan Hong replied.

In most guilds, there were usually policies that spared geniuses the liability of compensating for the damage they have caused. More often than not, the guild could just report the issue to the headquarter, and the latter would send someone down to repair the relevant facilities.

However, this rule didn't hold in Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. After all, this place was literally a gathering of geniuses. If everyone were to act negligently and destroy as they pleased, how would the academy continue to function?

Even if they were to sell the principal of the academy away, they still wouldn't be able to bear the cost!

"H-how much did you say? T-twenty high-tier spirit stones?" Zhang Xuan's body swayed weakly, and he nearly spewed blood.

Are you joking with me?

If I have that much spirit stones, why would I even bother going through the trouble earning Academic Credits? I could have just easily bought them off others!

While Academic Credits were indeed valuable, there should be plenty of students who would be willing to sell it to him for high-tier spirit stones.

"Considering that you are a freshman and the matter is an unintentional doing on your part, I can reduce the compensation

by half for you. You just have to pay ten high-tier spirit stones!" Hong Yuan said.

"Ten... I don't have that much either." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

All in all, he only had one high-tier spirit stone, and he had obtained it from emerging as the champion of the Master Teacher Tournament. Even if he were to sell all of his possessions, he couldn't possibly fork out ten high-tier spirit stones!

"I know that you don't have that much, so I'll offer you an alternative then. As long as you work for the Blacksmith School for ten years, I'll consider it as you have repaid the debt!" Hong Yuan waved his hands.

High-tier spirit stones were used by Saint realm experts or those attempting a breakthrough to Saint realm, there was no way that a freshman like Zhang Xuan could possibly have any of that. From the very start, Yuan Hong had intended to have Zhang Xuan work to pay off his debt!

It wasn't uncommon for students to work in the schools of the academy. Take the receptionist Li Xuan for example, she was also a student working at the Blacksmith Academy to earn additional Academic Credits.

However, in Zhang Xuan's case, since he had to repay his debt, he wouldn't be receiving any Academic Credits for his effort.

"Ten years of work to repay a debt of ten high-tier spirit stones? That is an extremely good deal!"

"Indeed! High-tier spirit stones are incomparably valuable. Just a single one of them is worth 10,000 middle-tier spirit stones. It sure is kind of Vice School Head Yuan to offer such generous terms!"

"Well, the intention of the punishment is to deter future students who engaging in similar actions. Otherwise, even if he were to work for his entire life, it's questionable whether he can repay the

debt of ten high-tier spirit stones!"

...

Hearing Yuan Hong's words, the crowd nodded in approval.

To cultivators who possess significantly longer lifespan than an average human, ten year wasn't a long period of time. For an average 4-star master teacher, ten years might not even be enough for them to advance to 5-star.

To wipe off a debt of ten high-tier spirit stones with just ten years of work could already be considered as an extremely lenient term.

"Ten years?"

However, contrary to the response of the crowd, Zhang Xuan's lips twitched upon hearing those words.

It was questionable whether he would even need to stay in this academy for half a year, let alone ten years!

If he were to really spend ten years here, he would have already died from the Innate Fetal Poison before he was freed.

"I can't accept those terms. I don't have the time to do so!" Zhang Xuan shook his head and rejected the offer.

"You can't?" Yuan Hong's face turned livid, and his eyes narrowed menacingly.

As the vice head of the Blacksmith School, this was the first time a student was so arrogant as to bargain with him even after erring.

Even after laying ruins to the Passageway of Records, do you not feel the slightest guilt?

It's out of utmost kindness that I granted you the option of repaying your debt through work, did you think that you are in a position to bargain with me?

"How about this? Allow me to take a look at the damage to see if it can be fixed. If I can fix it, I won't have to compensate the

Blacksmith School, right?" After a long moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan suddenly asked.

"Fix? You?" Yuan Hong stared at Zhang Xuan as if he was looking at a monster.

Are you sure you brought your brain out with you today?

The Chamber of Earth Flame and Passageway of Corridor were constructed in a collaboration between 6-star pinnacle blacksmiths and celestial designers. Even Yuan Hong himself wasn't confident if he was sufficiently skilled to repair them, but this fellow said that he wanted to give it a try?

Who do you think you are? Blacksmith Grandmaster Wu Yangzi?

How conceited can you get?

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded. After a moment of hesitation, he added, "If I fail to fix it... I can offer you guidance on your smithing capability or your cultivation as compensation too."

"Offer me guidance? Audacious!" Yuan Hong flew into a rage.

He was an elder of the Master Teacher Academy, the vice-head of the Blacksmith School, a 6-star pinnacle master teacher! He was an esteemed figure throughout the Master Teacher Academy, and he had always been the one to offer guidance to others, taking others in as his disciple. Yet, a freshman actually dared to say that he could offer him guidance on his smithing or cultivation?

Do you know what the heck are you saying?

"Was this fellow's brain fried inside the Chamber of Earth Flame?"

"To speak of offering guidance to Vice School Head Yuan... Just what is going through his mind?"

Luo Yan and the others widened their eyes in disbelief at those words.

Brother, remember your identity! You are just a freshman!

To speak of offering guidance to Vice School Head Yuan, did you think that you are the head of the Blacksmith Academy or something?

Know your place!

"Ahh... What I mean is to have my teacher offer you some pointers on your cultivation!" Hearing the other party's furious bellow, Zhang Xuan was taken aback for a moment before he realized the implications of what he had said, so he quickly changed his words in embarrassment.

This was the side effect of disguising as 'Yang shi' too often. There were times which he would just find himself saying such words unwittingly.

As a mere freshman, it was no wonder why the others would be annoyed to hear him speak of offering guidance to a 6-star pinnacle master teacher.

"Teacher?" Suppressing his rage, Yuan Hong asked.

"My teacher Yang Xuan has once offered his pointers to Pavilion Master Mo Gaoyuan, and Elder Mo is also in awe of him." Zhang Xuan chuckled as he flicked his wrist and took out a token. "Here is the token Elder Mo gave me!"

"Elder Mo... You mean the head of the Beast Tamer School, Elder Mo?" Taking a glance at the token, Yuan Hong's eyebrows shot up.

As the vice head of the Blacksmith School, it was natural that he would recognize that token.

That token served as a symbol of Elder Mo's authority, and standing before it was as good as standing in the presence of Elder Mo himself. Due to the complications that came with it, Elder Mo would never give out his token easily.

Even though Yuan Hong and Elder Mo were both 6-star pinnacle master teachers, there was still a significant gap in their standing and their capability.

The fact that the latter was one of the Ten Great Master Teachers spoke loudly about his capability.

And furthermore... what did this fellow just say?

His teacher, Yang Xuan, had once offered his pointers to Mo Gaoyuan?

As the head of Hongyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion, Mo Gaoyuan possessed a standing on par with the Ten Great Master Teachers. To be able to offer guidance to such a person, didn't that mean that... Yang Xuan was at least a 7-star master teacher?

In an instant, Yuan Hong's face turned grave.

If he had been thinking of strangling this ignorant fellow to death just a moment ago, at this instant, he was starting to feel a little apprehensive.

"Head of the Beast Tamer School? He's a school head too?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"You didn't know?"

Judging how the other party didn't know Elder Mo's position in the academy, it didn't seem like they have a close relationship. Nevertheless, Elder Mo still chose to give him his personal token. This seemed to hint that the other party had a truly incredible teacher.

Otherwise, why would one of the Ten Great Master Teachers go to the extent of giving a freshman his token? After all, there were many ways that he could show his goodwill towards a student.

It wouldn't make sense for him to give out his personal token to a person he had barely met.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan shook his head in response to Yuan Hong's query.

He had never heard anyone speaking about it before him, so naturally, he was unaware of it.

"Elder Mo is a close acquaintance of mine, but even so, I can't excuse you from the repayment. However, I can consider other alternative solutions you propose." After a moment of contemplation, Yuan Hong said.

Regardless of whether what the other party said was true or not, the fact that he had Elder Mo's token in hand goes to say that how highly the latter valued him. But even with the immense authority the Ten Great Master Teachers wielded, they couldn't override the rules of the academy.

"It's my mistake that I damaged the Passageway of Records and Chamber of Earth Flame. Can you allow me to attempt to repair it? If it still doesn't work out after that... I'll try to find a way to repay the Blacksmith School." Zhang Xuan asked.

"Since you have Elder Mo's token in hand, you should be a trustworthy person. Alright, I'll give you this opportunity then!" Yuan Hong nodded.

It would be best if the other party could fix the damage, but even if he were to fail, that should make him give up on any other ideas he had in mind.

"Elder Mo's token?"

"Who in the world is that fellow?"

"His teacher even offered pointers to Pavilion Master Mo? When did such an incredible figure appear amidst the freshmen..."

Hearing the conversation between the duo, a commotion broke out amidst the crowd.

Li Xuan and Luo Yan glanced at one another in astonishment.

It was just a moment ago that they had shown their displeasure towards Zhang Xuan. They thought that it would be fine since he was just a freshman, but who could have known that he would have such a powerful backing!

To be honest, if he had taken out Elder Mo's token earlier on, they would have even willingly lent him their Academic Credits

Chapter 735 Repairing The Passageway

"With such a formidable teacher... Could he have really broken the record?"

Before this revelation, everyone was still doubtful as to whether he had truly broken the record. However, after hearing that the other party had a formidable teacher whom even Pavilion Master Mo and Elder Mo were in awe of, their mind couldn't help but wonder if he might be speaking the truth.

Master teachers who had progressed beyond 6-star possessed incredible means which they could hardly fathom.

This was also the reason why the offsprings of Sage Clans possessed formidable capabilities far beyond their peers. Entitled from birth, the offsprings of Sage Clans were exposed to things that were far beyond their wildest imagination, thus paving the way to greatness.

"You have my gratitude!" Upon hearing Yuan Hong agree to his terms, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Since it was crafted by a 6-star blacksmith and a 6-star celestial designer, he might just be able to fix it. If he were to succeed, he could spare himself from paying that heavy compensation!

In a sense, not having to pay that hefty compensation could be considered as earning that sum of money as well!

It couldn't be helped, he was simply too poor at the moment. He had yet to reach the point where he could spend money as he pleased.

Walking over to the ruins, Zhang Xuan took in a deep breath and placed his hand on the ruins.

Back then, when he was still in the Chamber of Earth Flame, he had only used his Eye of Insight. As such, he hadn't compiled a book on the chamber and the passageway yet.

As the mechanisms and the formation of the two were connected to form an immense structure, he should be able to compile a book on them by placing his hand against the wall.

"Flaws!" Zhang Xuan muttered in his head, and with a jolt, a book appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path. He quickly turned his gaze to it.

After flipping through a few pages, his eyes narrowed.

The reason why the infrastructure collapsed was due to the depletion of the spiritual energy gathered in the Earth Flame Hearts, resulting in an imbalance in the formation. As the formation served as the energy supply for the mechanisms for the Passageway of Records, it ended up breaking down as well.

If Zhang Xuan wanted to fix the problem, he would have to first find four more Earth Flame Hearts to substitute the depleted ores. From there on, he would be able to repair and re-establish balance in the formation, and that should allow the mechanisms of the passageway to function once more as well.

Repairing the formation and re-establishing balance, those were within his means. However... where was he supposed to find Earth Flame Hearts?

Even if he were to put aside the fact that Earth Flame Hearts were extremely rare commodities that one could hardly find in the market, given his current wealth, he wouldn't be able to afford one even if he were to stumble on one by some coincidence!

"There is no way I can repair it like that unless... I can solve the flaw regarding the usage of Earth Flame Hearts as catalysts for the formation!" Zhang Xuan fell into deep thoughts.

The Earth Flame Hearts were listed as a flaw in the Library of Heaven's Path due to several compatibility issues with the formation. If Zhang Xuan could find a cheaper and more effective alternative, he would be able to spare himself a lot of trouble.

But this had its own problems too. What he should swap it with and how he would swap it were questions he would have to answer if so. However, Zhang Xuan's understanding of the entire system was still far too lacking for him to come up with a feasible solution.

In the end, Zhang Xuan turned to Yuan Hong and asked, "Elder, I have one request to ask of you..."

Even though he didn't know what was the position of the old man before him, there should be no mistake addressing him as "elder".

"What is it?" Yuan Hong frowned.

"It's like that... I've examined the passageway and gained some understanding of its workings and sustained damage. However... there are some things which I am not too sure of, so may I borrow some related books on this subject in the Blacksmith School to browse through?"

Since Zhang Xuan was lacking information, there was only one thing to do—gather sufficient books to form a corresponding Heaven's Path secret manual.

This might be extremely abrupt and last-minute, but there was nothing more effective than that at the moment.

"You wish to browse through some books?" Yuan Hong was stunned.

To only start reading up right now, don't you think it's a little too late?

"What kind of books do you need?" Even though Yuan Hong was a little iffy about Zhang Xuan's intentions, he still decided to ask anyway.

"Any books regarding the Chamber of Earth Flame will do. The more there is, the better it'll be..." Zhang Xuan replied.

The Chamber of Earth Flame was an extremely complex system

which intricacies could easily take months to comprehend, and yet Zhang Xuan didn't seem to have the slightest clue on where he should start.

A dark line streaked across Yuan Hong's face, but eventually, after a deep breath, he turned to the side and instructed, "Luo Yan, bring all of the books regarding the Chamber of Earth Flame from our library here."

If it was anyone else, he would have never granted him this privilege. However, that fellow before him had Elder Mo's token in hand, and he seemed to have the backing of a formidable teacher as well. Frustrated as he may be, he still decided to hold himself back.

And more importantly, he was also curious to see how the other party intended to fixing the Chamber of Earth Flame when it was already left in such ruins.

"He wants to read up? But considering how complex the formation and mechanism is, can he even understand those books?"

"Indeed, I also have no idea what's going on. Perhaps he wants to analyze its internal structure?"

"In any case, the blueprints of the Chamber of Earth Flame aren't secrets. The only thing valuable about it is the four Earth Flame Hearts used as the core of the center formation. I heard that the Blacksmith School had to pay a hefty price to obtain it back then. As long as those Earth Flame Hearts remain intact, it shouldn't be too difficult to fix it."

...

After hearing the young man's intentions of reading through books regarding the Chamber of Earth Flame, doubt flickered across everyone's faces.

While books were useful sources of knowledge, it was impossible to fully grasp such a complex subject without the guidance of a

teacher.

So far, there had never been a person who had become a great expert of the continent by secluding himself and studying by his own.

That fellow had declared confidently that he would attempt to fix the damage, so everyone thought that he would have some level of proficiency in smithing and mechanism design. Who knew that he would end up engaging in last-minute studying instead...

If that could really work, everyone would have been 6-star master teachers by now! It was no wonder why Vice School Head Yuan Hong was so angry.

Ignoring the bizarre gazes around him, Zhang Xuan waited patiently, and before long, Luo Yan returned back into the room.

The books on the Chamber of Earth Flame were placed together, so it wasn't too difficult to gather all of them together. After allowing his teacher to double check the titles, Luo Yan flicked his wrist, and a pile of several hundred books appeared before him.

Some of these books depict the structure of the Chamber of Earth Flame, some of them explained the functions of it, and there were even some with several suggestions for improvement on them... However, many of these suggestions were just opinions from the authors, making it difficult to discern right from wrong.

Walking up to the book, Zhang Xuan took a deep breath and touched every single one of them, as if he was trying to find a certain book. Soon, after his finger brushed through every last one of them, he casually picked up a book and flipped it open.

His eyes were fixated on the content of the book, but his consciousness was deep within the Library of Heaven's Path, compiling the content of the books he had just gathered together.

Hu!

A moment later, a brand-new book appeared before him, and

Zhang Xuan swiftly flipped it open.

"There are still so many flaws?" After taking a look, his eyelids began twitching uncontrollably.

It seemed like several hundred books were still far from enough! He was still unable to iron out all of the flaws to form a perfect manual. Taking a swift glance, there was actually 52 of them!

Nevertheless, his goal wasn't to perfect the manual. More importantly, he just had to find a suitable substitution for the Earth Flame Hearts.

Flipping through the book swiftly, he soon found a portion regarding the Earth Flame Heart flaw.

"Earth Flame Hearts are incompatible with the formation in the Chamber of Flames, resulting in high energy inefficiency. If they could be placed with Earth Flame, the efficiency could be enhanced severalfold, and there will be no worry of the depletion of the catalyst as it could be easily retrieved from the ground. However, Earth Flame is extremely difficult to control, and its heat intensity is lacking as compared to Earth Flame Hearts..."

The content extended over an entire page.

While Earth Flame was stated as a plausible substitute, it had its own flaws as well, and it wouldn't be easy to make the swap as well.

First and foremost, Earth Flame was lacking in heat intensity, so its effects wouldn't be as pronounced as with Earth Flame Hearts. Considering how the Chamber of Earth Flame was intended as a trial to one's physical resilience to heat, it wouldn't do for the temperature to be lowered.

If Zhang Xuan wanted to use it as a catalyst, he would have to find a way to raise its heat intensity somehow. One method came into his mind—auxiliary formation.

One of the books did propose the usage of a 5-star auxiliary

formation to further intensify the heat in the Chamber of Earth Flame. Given Zhang Xuan's current ability, he was more than capable of setting up a 5-star formation.

However, there was another potential problem. To set up a 5-star auxiliary formation in the Chamber of Earth Flame, he would have to project it over the original formation. When formations compound with one another, it was extremely easy for them to come into conflict with one another, thus making an explosion extremely likely!

As a result, the usage of Earth Flame as a catalyst for the Chamber of Earth Flame was only practical in theory.

In order to ensure stability in both formations, one would have to identify the balance point and establish power equilibrium from that point. However, even the most capable of formation masters in Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy didn't possess the means to do so, needless to say, others.

This was precisely the reason why the original builders of the Chamber of Earth Flame decided to go to great lengths to obtain Earth Flame Hearts to construct it.

But while finding the balance point might be a nigh impossible for others, it was no problem for Zhang Xuan at all!

Wasn't it just a mere balance point?

Of his formation master capabilities, this seemed to be his greatest specialization...

Breaking formations, challenging the Sea of Formations, calming the Cleansing Lake... It was through finding the respective balance points that he was able to achieve those feats and make a name for himself!

"However... I still don't have a complete understanding of the Chamber of Earth Flame yet. It won't be easy for me to find the balance point like that. Nevertheless, 10 high-tier spirit stones are

at stake, I should give it a try regardless!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Other than the stability issue, there were still many other problems that Zhang Xuan had to resolve. For one, Earth Flame was far more deconcentrated than Earth Flame Hearts, and this could potentially result in an unstable intensity of heat throughout the Chamber of Earth Flame.

It was problematic that Zhang Xuan didn't have sufficient information to work with in order to construct a perfect formation to resolve all of the problems. However, the main issue at hand should be swapping the Earth Flame Hearts with Earth Flame and ensuring the stability of the compounding formation. As long as he could achieve that, he should be able to deal with the other problems slowly after that.

"Alright, the Earth Flame it shall be then!"

After running some simulation scenarios in his head, Zhang Xuan verified that there shouldn't be too much of an issue with it before standing up once more.

"This elder over here, may I know if there is any way to connect the Chamber of Earth Flame directly to the Earth Flame beneath the ground?"

"Earth Flame? It should be possible to do so." Yuan Hong nodded. "Often, our blacksmiths require the immense heat from the earth to refine and mold metal. Thus, we have procured a direct source to it in our Blacksmith School."

It wasn't uncommon for students of the Blacksmith School to have to handle difficult ores, and ordinary coals often produce insufficient heat process them.

As such, a huge formation was crafted within the Blacksmith School in order to allow students to tap into the Earth Flame below directly.

"That's great!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up. "I would like to borrow

that for a use. May I ask elder to help connect the source of the Earth Flame to the formation in the Chamber of Earth Flame?"

"You intend to use Earth Flame to substitute the Earth Flame Hearts?" Yuan Hong frowned.

"Yes, I have found a feasible solution to do so. Don't worry, I'm certain about its feasibility!" Zhang Xuan said with a confident smile.

"Alright then!" Seeing Zhang Xuan's confident face, Yuan Hong hesitated for a moment before eventually relenting.

While Earth Flame was indeed dangerous, he had handled it many times in the past while smithing weapons, so controlling it wasn't too much of an issue for him. Given such, he should be able to handle the situation even if things were to go awry, so it shouldn't be dangerous.

In any case, since that fellow had declared his confidence, he was also curious to see what he was up to.

If this were to succeed, that fellow would be doing what countless predecessors had failed at. This would be, in the truest sense, the breaking of a record!

Yuan Hong left the room, returning with a metal formation plate in hand a moment later. After checking the positioning, he placed the formation plate on the ground and injected a surge of zhenqi into it.

Weng!

The engravings on the formation plate began to shine, and a searing heat permeated the surroundings. Suddenly, a pillar of fire rose from the ground like a flame dragon, seemingly intent on melting down the surroundings.

However, the flame dragon was swiftly suppressed and kept under control under Yuan Hong's proficient maneuvers.

"Thank you!" Zhang Xuan smiled.

The temperature of the Earth Flame was indeed subpar compared to the Earth Flame Heart. It seemed like the book was right. He would have to use an auxiliary formation to intensify the heat if he wished to restore the Chamber of Earth Flame back to its previous state.

Chapter 736 Goner!

"Time to begin!"

Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and a handful of formation flags appeared in his grasp.

There were quite a few 5-star formation flags in Yu Cheng's storage ring that he could use. These formation flags were attributeless, making them ideal to craft the auxiliary formation.

Hu hu hu!

With a flick of his wrist, several hundred formation flags shot out and fell in the vicinity of the formation plate.

Following which, Zhang Xuan took a step forward and stomped his foot on the ground.

Weng!

With a buzz, the formation flags were immediately triggered with a slight tremor. A dense layer of mist emerged in the surroundings, shrouding the formation plate entirely.

Hong long!

The flame dragon prowling at the center of the formation plate abruptly grew from a meter tall to dozens of meters, and it seemed as if it would surge beyond the tall ceiling, burning the roof down to cinders!

"This is a grade-5 formation? How can he set it up so quickly?" Yuan Hong's eyebrows leaped up in astonishment.

Formation master was one of his supporting occupations as well, but even as a 6-star master teacher, he knew it was impossible for him to set up a formation so swiftly.

Yet, the other party was able to do it so easily. Furthermore, he noticed that the method used in setting up the formation was very foreign to him. For even a 6-star master teacher like him to be

unaware of it, chances were that the other party had truly received the teachings of a high-ranked master teacher.

Legend has it that top-notch formation masters had their unique techniques to swiftly set up formations and enhance the might of it.

Most likely, that fellow was using something like that.

"To intensify the Earth Flame so swiftly... the formation he is setting up should be an auxiliary formation to increase the pace at which the Earth Flame is being drawn at!" Yuan Hong nodded.

Despite Zhang Xuan's swift movement, he was still able to roughly tell the gist of the formation through its effects and the positioning of the flags.

However... what was the point of setting up this formation?

Was that fellow intending on using Earth Flame to replace the Earth Flame Hearts?

"But surely that should be unfeasible? Even if the pace at which Earth Flame is being drawn at were to be enhanced, it will only make the flame dragon grow larger. It has minimal effect on the heat intensity..." Yuan Hong frowned.

As the vice head of the Blacksmith School, he could at least tell that much.

While the auxiliary formation would increase in the pace at which Earth Flame was being drawn out at, that would only lead to a quantitative increase in the flame dragon.

To make an analogy, it would be like the difference between burning a kilogram of coal and a ton of coal. Despite the difference in quantity, the difference in the temperature between the two would only be minimal at best.

"Rest assured, I have a plan in mind." With a light chuckle, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out another set of formation flags.

Hualala!

With another flick of his hand, the flags were planted at the perimeter of the first formation.

Weng!

Zhang Xuan stomped his foot, and the formation was activated as well.

Hu hu hu!

As soon as the formation whirled into action, the towering flame dragon instantaneously withered, returning back to its original size of one meter.

However, despite the reduction in size, the heat it emanated was visibly far more hot than before, and even from a distance, the crowd could still feel a searing heat wave gushing at them.

"This... You compressed the flame dragon to forcefully raise the temperature? Not bad!" Astonishment flickered across Yuan Hong's face.

The first formation increased the rate at which Earth Flame was drawn at whereas the second formation aimed to compress the Earth Flame as far as possible.

After undergoing compression, the Earth Flame might have reduced in size, but it was far more frightening than ever. In an instant, its temperature rose by more than tenfold!

Even Yuan Hong didn't have the confidence of withstanding such intense heat.

"This... Is he really intending on using the Earth Flame to substitute the Earth Flame Hearts?" Yuan Hong's face twitched.

Even though he had a rough idea of what Zhang Xuan was intending to do earlier, he subconsciously denied the possibility, thinking that it was impossible. However, as Zhang Xuan continued on, the doubt he harbored earlier intensified.

As the two formations continued to operate, the temperature of the Earth Flame rose higher and higher, and before long, it was already nearing an Earth Flame Heart.

Perhaps, this fellow might just be able to fix the Chamber of Earth Flame... However, Earth Flame was already an unstable material in itself. To extract large amounts of it and compress them together tightly... Was he really able to keep it under control?

The moment that he loses control over the Earth Flame, the entire Blacksmith School might potentially be destroyed.

Yuan Hong wasn't the only one worried about that. Unsettled frowns were appearing on the many master teachers watching the spectacle as well.

How could those who dared to venture to the Passageway of Records and challenge the achievements of their predecessors be ordinary master teachers? While they were unable to name the two formations Zhang Xuan had set up, they were still able to comprehend their function and purpose.

Watching as more and more Earth Flame was compacted within the flame dragon, as well as sensing the astounding heat being emanated from it, they couldn't help but feel their goosebumps rising in fear despite their formidable cultivation.

If they were to be caught up in an explosion involving it, there was no doubt that they would be burned into cinders.

"This should be enough!"

On the other hand, oblivious to the shock rippling through the crowd, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief after successfully setting up the formation.

While it may seem like two formations from the outside, it was actually just one formation consisting of an internal layer and an external layer.

The internal layer was responsible for drawing more Earth Flame into the formation, and the external layer would compress the energy to enhance its concentration.

When used in unison, it could force Earth Flame to emulate the effects of the Earth Flame Heart.

This was designed by a 6-star pinnacle formation master many years ago for the Chamber of Earth Flame. However, he was unable to resolve the issue regarding the instability of compound formations, so his plan never came to be.

"Time to start!"

Knowing that the difficulty would only rise the further he progresses, Zhang Xuan took in a deep breath and activated his Eye of Insight.

With the third acknowledgement of Celestial Master Teacher, his Eye of Insight had been enhanced once again. As long as he was unwilling to reveal it, not even a 6-star master teacher would notice his Eye of Insight.

Considering how his cultivation was still limited, it would be best for him to conceal his Eye of Insight for the time being until he possesses sufficient strength to protect himself.

Despite being concealed from the view of others, the Eye of Insight was still as powerful as ever. With its activation, the ruined formation swiftly appeared before Zhang Xuan's eyes. The hidden formation flags flickered into existence around the flame dragon.

"All that's left to do is to activate this formation..."

The original formation in the Chamber of Earth Flame had only broken down due to the lack of energy to power it. As long as he could activate it through the flame dragon, the Chamber of Earth Flame should function once more. Stepping forward, Zhang Xuan walked up to the crux of the formation.

"Activate!"

Stomping on the ground, Zhang Xuan infused his zhenqi into the center of the formation, and the formation was activated with a slight trembling of the flags. A mist began to form around the flame dragon.

Hualala!

However, as soon as the flame dragon came into contact with the mist, a sound of disharmony, reminiscent of something collapsing, abruptly sounded. It was as if the two formations were incompatible with one another, and an explosion would be imminent if they weren't separated immediately.

"This is bad..." Yuan Hong's face paled upon seeing that sight.

Formations couldn't be compounded with one another. He had once witnessed a 6-star formation master being blasted to death in an attempt to compound formations. If an explosion were to occur here, the Blacksmith School might just be wiped out from the surface of the world.

Thus, he immediately stepped forward in preparation to suppress the formation. However, just as he was about to make a move, the young man abruptly shook his hand, and a spirit beast inner core was thrown into the center of the mist.

Hu!

As soon as the inner core came into contact with the mist, the sound of disharmony immediately dispelled. All of a sudden, the formation was stabilized as if it had found its cornerstone.

"That... he found the balance point between the two formations?" Yuan Hong widened his eyes in shock.

To make the rampaging formation calm down so swiftly, there could only be one possibility. That fellow must have found the balance point between the two formations and reinforced it.

"If I recall correctly... A Transcendent Mortal 8-dan Glaciersnow Fish's inner core. Considering its cold attribute, it is indeed an

ideal mediator for a fire attribute formation like this..." Recalling the details of the spirit beast inner core thrown out earlier, Yuan Hong couldn't help but nod in approval.

Not only had the other party found the balance point of the two formations, he even wisely utilized a complementary factor—the cold attribute Glaciersnow Fish inner core—to mediate the flame energy. As the saying goes, "no shadow creeps in the absence of light, and no light exists without the presence of shadow". Through a contrasting mediating factor, he successfully stabilized the formation entirely!

"Compounding a formation to another through a set of well-defined sequence, incredible!" To be able to go that far with Earth Flame, this fellow was indeed a true genius!

It was no wonder why he declared confidently that he would be able to fix the formation. It seemed like he did possess the capability to back up his words.

As long as a balance was established with the formations, the rest could be easily fixed through employing some workers.

Seeing the formation being stabilized, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

When he first read about the Chamber of Flames in his book, it was filled with so many flaws that he thought that it would be difficult for him to successfully set it up. To his surprise, everything went smoothly.

"I'm done." With a light chuckle, Zhang Xuan turned around and reported.

"This is... the Chamber of Earth Flame?"

"How beautiful! With so many flames flying around the room, can a human really step into it?"

"What an incredible heat! Senior Luo Yan, did you really survive three minutes inside? I don't think that I can even last ten seconds

in there before I am reduced to ashes..."

...

Looking at the exposed Chamber of Earth Flame, the crowd flew into a commotion.

Due to the rumors surrounding the Chamber of Earth Flame, there were very few who had opted to challenge. Thus, many were ignorant about the conditions inside.

As the Passageway of Records hadn't been restored yet, there were no walls to conceal it. As a result, the situation within was plain for everyone to see, and the fearsome heat within left many astounded.

Leaping flames and blistering heat... How did the previous record holder even last seventeen minutes under such extreme conditions?

And did the fellow before them really last two hours within?

"Elder, I have successfully fixed the Chamber of Earth Flame. I should be spared from compensation now, right?" Ignoring the astonishment of the crowd, Zhang Xuan turned to Yuan Hong and asked.

"It does seem to be repaired on the surface. However, I'll have to test the effects of the Chamber of Earth Flame personally to verify it!" Yuan Hong waved his hands.

Even though the Chamber of Earth Flame seemed no different from before, there was still a need to examine its effectiveness, especially given the difference in the catalyst.

"Please do." Zhang Xuan smiled as he gestured the other party forward.

"Un. I was once in charge of maintaining the Passageway of Records, so I have a good idea of how the conditions should be like inside. I'll go in to take a look!" Yuan Hong nodded.

In his years in the Blacksmith School, there was a period of time where he was placed in charge of the amenities of the school. He understood the structure of the Chamber of Earth Flame well, and the best way to verify if it had been restored was to test it out personally.

As such, Yuan Hong began making his way into the Chamber of Earth Flame.

Weng!

As soon as he stepped in, the flames scattered in the area began gathering around him, and the temperature started to rise swiftly.

"Hm?" Noticing that the functioning in the Chamber of Earth Flame was slightly different from what he saw earlier, Zhang Xuan frowned.

At that instant, a thought suddenly struck him, and he swiftly turned to Luo Yan and asked, "What material did the Blacksmith School use to craft the formation plate used to grab earth flame from beneath the ground?"

"Oh, it's an alloy made of Verdantise Rock and Furnace Crystal!" Luo Yan replied after a moment of contemplation.

"Verdantise Rock and Furnace Crystal?" Zhang Xuan's eyes widened in shock.

Just as he was about to continue speaking, the ground abruptly shook.

Hong long!

With loud rumblings, a massive surge of heat wave abruptly rose from the ground, resulting in a pandemonium.

Following which, the Passageway of Records collapsed, followed by the Blacksmith Guild's main hall...

Chapter 737 Consulting the School Head

Hualala!

Dust rose rapidly from the ground. The master teachers who had been spectating the sight abruptly backed away in fear.

Peng peng peng peng!

Consecutive collisions sounded as dozens of master teachers were slammed violently against a wall.

Quickly stabilizing his posture, Zhang Xuan gazed at the sight before him, and his lips began to twitch.

Not only had the Passageway of Records collapsed entirely, half of the Blacksmith Guild's main hall had also collapsed, leaving behind a cloak of dust in the wake of its former glory. The entire area screamed of a disaster, as if it had been bombarded.

If Zhang Xuan's action of collapsing the Chamber of Earth Flame had sent everyone into a frenzy a moment ago, this was at least ten times worse!

The Passageway of Records and its mechanisms and formations along with half of the main hall had been completely wrecked. Even if it is fixed eventually, the Blacksmith School would still become a laughingstock for the entire Master Teacher Academy.

There was probably no one who would have thought that a mere record challenger would end up reducing the entire branch into such a state!

It was fortunate that most of the master teachers in the Blacksmith Guild possessed incredible cultivation. Protected by their zhenqi, they sustained minimal injuries, but... considering how a Chamber of Earth Flame was worth 20 high-tier spirit stones, how much will all of this cost?

Zhang Xuan's lips twitched as he saw the sight before him slowly

turning dark. At this point, he was already on the verge of tears.

There was nothing wrong with the Earth Flame which he had tempered to replace the Earth Flame Heart, and the formation had been reinforced to be extremely stable as well.

It should be impossible for anything to go wrong, but something still did. The mistake lay in the formation plate used to draw earth flame from the ground. The Verdantise Rock and Furnace Crystal were valuable ores, but they were susceptible to heat under extreme conditions.

Typically speaking, those ores should be able to endure the heat from Earth Flame, but there was one thing Zhang Xuan had neglected.

The formation in the Chamber of Earth Flame was crafted in the manner such that it would emit varying degrees of heat depending on the cultivation of the person who stepped in. When Yuan Hong stepped into the formation, the temperature began rising swiftly, eventually exceeding the melting points of those ores. Naturally, it began to lose its shape.

This was similar to delivery trucks from his previous life.

If one were to follow the weight limit, it could last for a very long time. However, if one were to overload it, it could be damaged very easily.

If that formation plate to retrieve Earth Flame from the ground was crafted of better materials, this wouldn't be a problem. However, that wasn't the case.

As the formation plate began to melt, the stability which Zhang Xuan had created with great difficulty was shaken, resulting in the violent Earth Flame running amok... As a result, a calamity occurred.

In other words...

If it wasn't Yuan Hong who entered, such a problem would have

never occurred!

It was due to the formation plate being too weak and Yuan Hong being too strong that such an accident happened.

This was something Zhang Xuan hadn't expected to happen.

Even the elder who had come up with this solution probably couldn't have imagined that the complex compound formation he came up with would fall apart due to inferior quality material.

"This isn't my fault..." With a tearful face, Zhang Xuan's lips twitched uncontrollably.

While that was what Zhang Xuan believed, the others didn't share his thoughts. As the shaking ground calmed, Luo Yan and the others stood up and glanced at the ruins around them before turning to him. Their eyes were filled with so much fury that it seemed as if they would devour him alive.

This was the core of their Blacksmith School! How were they supposed to smith weapons now that it had been reduced to ruins? How could they raise their heads proudly before the other schools?

"What did you do..." Luo Yan spat through clenched teeth.

At this moment, he felt so angry that his hands were dying to rip the fellow before him apart. In the end, he still chose to suppress his anger, and turning to the side, he instructed, "You two, keep a close eye on him, don't let him escape. As for the rest, follow me. We'll go and save my teacher!"

This wasn't the time to deal with that fellow yet. His teacher's safety was the current priority.

"Yes!" Two master teachers stepped forward and stood by Zhang Xuan's flanks, sealing his path of escape.

On the other hand, the others swiftly rushed to the ruins of where the Chamber of Earth Flame once stood.

The explosion had caused the entire Passageway of Records and

the branch to collapse. Considering how Vice School Head Yuan had been standing at the center of the explosion, he was probably in a worse state than everyone else.

But just as they were about to start digging through the ruins, "huala!", a figure suddenly emerged amidst the dust—Yuan Hong.

At this very moment, a huge portion of his hair had been burnt away. His face was livid, and flames of rage were burning in his eyes, and it seemed as if he was on the verge of going on a rampage.

"Cough cough!"

As soon as Yuan Hong rose from the dust, he began coughing violently, and fresh blood spewed from his mouth. His body wobbled feebly.

"Teacher..."

"Vice School Head Yuan..."

Everyone immediately rushed up to him in worry.

The person before them was a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, a Saint realm expert. How wounded must he be to be in such a state?

"I'm fine!" Yuan Hong waved his hands as a sharp glint flashed across his eyes.

"Where's that fellow?"

Had he not used his full strength to suppress the explosion, perhaps half of the entire Blacksmith School might have been reduced to ashes by now.

Didn't you declare confidently that there wouldn't be any problems?

Didn't you reassure me time and time again that it would be fine?

Tell me what is this then!

Why was I so foolish as to listen to your lies...

The more he thought about it, the more furious Yuan Hong felt.

"He's over there..." Luo Yan pointed to the side, only to see the young man walking over under the "escort" of the other two master teachers.

"Who in the world are you? What do you intend to do here?" Yuan Hong roared furiously.

He was beginning to suspect that the fellow might have been sent by the other schools to wreak havoc here.

Otherwise, how could a simple record challenge cause such a huge stir? Wasn't the very notion of it inconceivable?

"All I wanted was to take the 5-star blacksmith examination..." Zhang Xuan sighed.

His goal was that simple, but who could have thought that he would require Academic Credits for even that. Left with no choice, he could only seek a way to earn some... He thought that it should be a walk in a park, but in the end, not only did he fail to earn his Academic Credits, he even got himself in such a huge mess!

"Take the 5-star blacksmith examination? You call this taking the 5-star blacksmith examination? Admit it, you're here to tear down our school!" Yuan Hong said as he gritted his teeth furiously.

When other students take the examination, we earn Academic Credits and money, but when it comes to you... Are you sure you aren't trying to slaughter us all!

If not for my swift reaction and high cultivation, I would have died in there!

Have you ever seen anyone who tore down a guild while trying to take an examination?

"I... really didn't do it intentionally. How about this, I'm willing to compensate for this..." Zhang Xuan's face reddened.

While everything that had happened felt like a cruel prank from the heavens, the issue still ultimately originated from him, so he

had to carry the responsibility for everything that had happened. The only thing he could do now was to offer compensation.

"Compensate? What are you going to compensate us with? Can you even afford to compensate us?" Yuan Hong was so angry that his body began shaking in fury.

Gathered in the Passageway of Records is the achievements of countless predecessors before them, how are you going to compensate for that? Besides, you can't even fork out ten high-tier spirit stones, what can you offer us?

Even if we were to sell you, we won't be able to earn that much!

"Why don't you tell me... how much spirit stones do I need to compensate? I'll try my best to earn that sum and repay it to you..." Zhang Xuan said through clenched jaws.

At the very most, he would just have to do more part-time work and have Yang shi appear to treat patients and offer guidance. In any case, he would repay this debt.

While he couldn't be entirely blamed for this incident, it wouldn't be fair to the other party if he were to try to shrug off responsibility. Thus, he could only clench his jaws and shoulder it.

"Repay?" Yuan Hong sneered.

You sure know how to talk!

As a mere 4-star master teacher, even if you were to work your life away, you won't be able to repay this!

"Do you know how much damage have you caused?" With a sharp glint in his eyes, Yuan Hong bellowed. "There are a total of 37 challenges in the Passageway of Records, each of them containing the blood, sweat, and tears of countless predecessors, as well as innumerable precious artifacts and ores that couldn't be bought with money! Furthermore, adding in half of the guild branch into the mix, even three thousand high-tier spirit stones wouldn't be enough. Given so, you still dare to talk about compensation? Tell

me! How do you intend to compensate?"

Blacksmith was an extremely money-consuming occupation. Amenities required for smithing wasn't cheap, especially for advanced facilities to process high-grade ores. It wouldn't be a joke to say that every inch of the Blacksmith Guild was worth gold.

To cause such immense damage to the Blacksmith Guild... Even a 7-star low-tier master teacher would find it hard to compensate all of this, needless to say, you!

"Three thousand high-tier spirit stones?" Zhang Xuan's body wobbled weakly.

He only had a high-tier spirit stone in possession at the moment. Even if he were to sell all of his possessions, he would only have at most ten. Three thousand... how could he possibly afford such a sum!

Even if he were to disguise as Yang shi, he wouldn't be able to earn so much within a short period of time.

"What are the other record challenges here? Why don't I... try fixing them?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Since he couldn't possibly fork the bill, he could only offer to help fix as much as he could to lower his debt.

"You..."

Yuan Hong nearly died of anger after hearing those words.

That fellow arrogantly promised that he would be able to fix the Chamber of Earth Flame, but what happened afterward?

From the collapse of a single chamber, the destruction extended to half of the entire branch!

Furthermore, the damages increased by ten high-tier spirit stones to three thousand. That was an increase of three hundred folds!

He thought that the other party should at least comprehend what

kind of situation he was in and take a humbler attitude, but to think that he was so brazen as to continue shooting his mouth here...

Repair your head!

If I were to allow you to continue acting as you please, the Blacksmith School or perhaps even the entire Master Teacher Academy would be destroyed by you!

Furthermore, the Passageway of Records wasn't something that a blacksmith could fix by his own. There were also many mechanisms involved, so the expertise of a celestial designer was required as well.

No matter how skilled you are at smithing, you won't be able to fix them on your own as long as you are ignorant of mechanical engineering!

"If it requires expertise on mechanical engineering as well, I can go and take the celestial designer examination first..." Perhaps realizing what Yuan Hong was thinking of, Zhang Xuan quickly added.

"..." Yuan Hong body shook feebly once more.

Aren't you getting more and more arrogant?

Take the celestial designer examination first? Do you think that the examination will be so easy that you can pass it as and when you like?

"Keep a close eye on this lad..." With his cheeks crimson with rage, Yuan Hong felt that he might die from anger if he were to continue speaking with the other party. Thus, he waved his hands and turned his head away.

"Yes!" Luo Yan and the others hurriedly nodded.

"I'll go and consult the school head on this matter. In the meantime, make sure that he doesn't get away..." Yuan Hong

instructed.

The current situation was already beyond his control. He had to report it to the school head.

The school head would then decide on what to do with this fellow!

"Yes!" the crowd answered.

"Vice School Head Yuan, the school head asks for you to go to his office as soon as possible!" At that moment, a master teacher suddenly rushed into the room anxiously and reported.

"He wants me to go to his office?" Yuan Hong was taken aback.

"Could he be aware of what is going on here?"

While there was a huge commotion here, considering the immense size of the Blacksmith School, and the far distance between the school head's office and here, the school head shouldn't have received the news yet. But if that wasn't the case, why would the latter be asking for him?

Chapter 738 Golden Armored Cloak

But regardless, since the school head was looking for him, he mustn't keep him waiting. After instructing Luo Yan and the others once more to not allow Zhang Xuan to get away at any cost, he followed the master teacher to the school head's office.

The Blacksmith School was extremely large, taking up more than several ten thousand mu of land. It was divided into the Smithery, Staff Office, Learning Hall, and various examination facilities.

(10,000 mu = 6,666,666m²)

Yuan Hong was in charge of the examination facilities, which was at the opposite end of the Staff Office.

Even so, with his incredible speed as a Saint realm expert, it didn't take him long to arrive before the school head's office.

Stepping into the office, he saw the school head and the other three vice school heads seated within, seemingly discussing something vital.

Head of the Blacksmith School, Zhao Bingxu, one of the Ten Great Master Teachers!

Of the entire Master Teacher Academy, his standing was second to only the head of the Apothecary School.

Seated upright at the end of the room, he carried a dignified and authoritative aura.

At this moment, the school head's eyebrows were knitted together, and the other three vice school heads had austere expressions on their faces as well.

"School head, you were looking for me?" Yuan Hong asked doubtfully as he headed towards an empty seat amidst the group.

"You arrived at a timely moment. There's something which I need your input on!" the school head nodded as he flicked his palm.

Huala!

A formation in the room was activated, creating a barrier between those in the room and the rest of the world.

With the activation of this barrier, it would be impossible for anyone outside to listen to the conversation within the room.

Of course, this also meant that news outside wouldn't be able to reach this room either as long as the formation was active.

Seeing the school head going to the extent of even activating a formation to ensure perfect confidentiality, Yuan Hong was bewildered.

"Since everyone has arrived, I'll start then." School Head Zhao Bingxu nodded with a grim expression. "Just a moment ago, Elder Mo and Pavilion Master Mo have gathered the Ten Great Master Teachers together and announced something vital!"

Yuan Hong's face twisted in astonishment.

It must be a grave matter for Pavilion Master Mo and Elder Mo to have to gather the Ten Great Master Teachers together to confer about it.

"Could it be... news about the old principal?" One of the vice school heads couldn't help but ask.

The most crucial issue the Master Teacher Academy was facing at the moment was the old principal going missing, resulting in the lack of a leader to unite the academy together.

It would be great if there was news on him!

"That's not it." Zhao Bingxu shook his head gravely. "The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe has been appeared in the vicinity of Hongyuan City!"

"Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?" Yuan Hong's body instantaneously tensed up.

As a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, he understood the

significance of an appearance of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

But for the school head to activate a formation of confidentiality, the matter probably wasn't as simple as a mere appearance of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

"That's right. Senior Byzantium Helios has come under their assault on Leiyuan Peak, and we are still unable to verify whether he's dead or alive at the moment." Zhao Bingxu said slowly.

The four men gathered here were the vice heads of the Blacksmith School, important pillars supporting humanity. They were trustworthy men whom he could entrust such crucial intelligence to.

"Senior Byzantium Helios has gone missing?" Yuan Hong and the others widened their eyes in astonishment.

They could hardly believe what they were hearing.

If that was truly the case, the situation must be truly dire!

Byzantium Helios Beast was the old principal's tamed beast, and his cultivation had long reached Saint 1-dan pinnacle. On top of that, as a saint beast, he commanded strength far beyond any of them here. If even he had fallen prey to the Otherworldly Demons... how powerful must their enemies be?

"Un. Senior Byzantium Helios went missing even before he could even send a message to us... Furthermore, based on the marks of battle left on Leiyuan Peak, there must be at least ten Saints among the Otherworldly Demons, and one of them was at least Saint 2-dan at minimum!" Zhao Bingxu said grimly.

The reason why he rushed here to inform the other vice school heads on this matter right after the conference was to have the Blacksmith School act immediately. If they were to delay on this matter, they might just miss the ideal window to save Byzantium Helios Beast.

"At least ten Saint realm Otherworldly Demons?"

"One of them is at least Saint 2-dan?"

Everyone trembled upon learning that news.

If that was really the case, this matter would be far beyond their ability.

"Should we... report this matter to the headquarter?" Yuan Hong asked.

With the appearance of so many Otherworldly Demons simultaneously, the Master Teacher Academy might just find itself overpowered. Given such, it might be preferable to have the headquarter send down stronger master teachers to deal with this issue.

"Mu shi from the headquarter has already arrived at the academy, and we have reported this matter to him as well. His view was to have us deal with this matter as far as we can, and if anyone succeeds in saving Senior Byzantium Helios, he would become the next principal of the academy!" Zhao Bingxu replied.

"The next principal?" Everyone's eyes immediately lit up.

If Zhao Bingxu could become the academy's new principal, the standing of the Blacksmith School in the academy would surely soar as well. It would only be a matter of time before it overtakes the Apothecary School as the first school in the academy.

"Un. The reason why I have all of you gathered here is to have you investigate the whereabouts of Senior Byzantium Helios. Our Blacksmith School must find him before the others..." Zhao Bingxu nodded, revealing his intentions.

"That's no problem at all!"

"School head, rest assured. We'll do our best!"

Hong Yuan and the others nodded.

This wasn't just a matter regarding Zhao Bingxu's promotion. The appearance of the Otherworldly Demons would be a threat to

the entire Master Teacher Academy and even humanity as a whole. Even without the incentive of the principal's seat, they were still obligated to do so.

"Good, that's all for now. Return and make whatever necessary arrangements!" Zhao Bingxu nodded.

"School head, there's a matter I need to report!" Seeing the school head dismissing them, one of the vice school heads immediately stood up and said.

"I also have a matter to report..." Yuan Hong also hurriedly said.

"Vice School Head Xiong, you'll go first!" Seeing that the two vice school heads had matters to report, Zhao Bingxu nodded.

Vice School Head Xiong Bing was in charge of the Learning Hall, and he had the closest relationship with the students as well.

"Alright!" Xiong Bing nodded. "It's like that. A while back, a student reported finding traces left behind by Elder Wu Yangzi, and she requested to initiate a mission on it... Such matters often occur, so I didn't think too much of it either. So, I offered them a few Academic Credits as the reward and sent them on their way."

Wu Yangzi was the most talented blacksmith in the past ten thousand years of history of Hongyuan Empire, and many students viewed him as their idol. As a result, there were many students who would approach him with news they had gathered on Wu Yangzi and apply for a mission each year, but most of them would turn out to just be mere rumors.

"Could it be... they succeeded?" Hearing Xiong Bing abruptly raising this matter, a thought flashed across Yuan Hong's head, and his breathing began to hasten in agitation.

If this was true, it would cause a huge uproar in the Blacksmith School!

Even though it had been long since Wu Yangzi had passed away, he still commanded great prestige amongst the blacksmiths in

Hongyuan City.

"It's still a little too early for me to verify whether it's true or not, but the one who reported the completion of the mission is... the Sixth Princess!" Xiong Bing said.

"Sixth Princess? You mean Princess Yu Fei-er?" Zhao Bingxu asked.

Yu Fei-er was a member of royalty, so even as one of the Ten Great Master Teachers, he had also heard about her.

"That's right. Not only so, there is Grade 2's Luo Qiqi and Xing Yuan from the Xing Clan!" Xiong Bing continued.

"I have heard of Luo Qiqi, she's a famous blacksmith genius in Grade 2. If we could groom her well, she would surely achieve great things in the future. As for Xing Yuan, is he that old fellow's offspring?" Zhao Bingxu asked.

"He is!" Xiong Bing nodded.

"Why would they suddenly go searching for Elder Wu Yangzi's whereabouts?" Yuan Hong asked in bewilderment.

Each year, there were many students who would attempt to search for Wu Yangzi's whereabouts to uncover the truth behind his disappearance, but often, the news they gathered turned out to just be rumors amongst the populace. As the top students of their grade, surely they should know better than to pursue groundless rumors?

"I am not too sure on that, but just today, they came to me and reported the completion of their mission. On top of that, they brought Elder Wu Yangzi's remains back... Due to the immense significance of this issue, I dare not pass judgement by myself. Thus, I hope that the rest of you can help me verify the authenticity of this issue as well!" Xiong Bing said gravely.

"Sure, we'll be more than willing to. Where are those students?" Zhao Bingxu said.

Everyone was taken aback to hear that the group had brought back Wu Yangzi's remains. Missions relating to searching for Wu Yangzi's whereabouts had always ended in a failure, but this group claimed to have found his body...

If that was true, this would truly be a huge matter!

While Zhao Bingxu was a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith as well, his skill was still terribly lacking as compared to Wu Yangzi. If the group had brought back any secret manuals left behind by Wu Yangzi along with them, the Blacksmith School could be revolutionized!

"They are currently waiting outside the room. I'll call them in now!" Xiong Bing hurriedly said.

"Alright!" Zhao Bingxu nodded.

Xiong Bing stepped out of the room, and a moment later, he returned with three students following behind him.

They were Xing Yuan, Luo Qiqi, and Yu Fei-er.

While Xing Yuan and Ye Qian had left Huanyu Empire earlier than Luo Qiqi and Yu Fei-er, the speed of the aerial spirit beast they took was far beneath that of the Great Violetwing Beast. As a result, Yu Fei-er and Luo Qiqi ended up arriving earlier than them.

As a result, it took them so long to gather together to report on the matter.

"Xing Yuan (Luo Qiqi, Yu Fei-er) pays respect to School Head Zhao and the other vice school heads!" The group clasped their fists and greeted.

"Spare with the ceremony!" Zhao Bingxu stroked his beard as his gaze fell on the group of three. "I heard that you found Elder Wu Yangzi's remains. Is that true?"

"That's true. This is the reason why we're here!" Xing Yuan nodded affirmatively. "I beseech School Head Zhao to verify the

authenticity of the remains!"

With those words, he flicked his wrist, and a corpse appeared before the crowd.

It was the body which they had found in the underground chamber.

"This..."

Upon seeing the corpse, Zhao Bingxu, Yuan Hong, and the others traded gazes, and their eyes narrowed.

As one of the top blacksmiths in Hongyuan City back in his time, there were many paintings on him, and they were passed down through the generations. The few of them had seen those paintings as well, and while the corpse before them was slightly withered, they were astonished to see that the distinctive features were identical to the painting depictions!

In other words... there was a good chance that the corpse before them belonged to Elder Wu Yangzi!

Could they have really accomplished what countless before them had failed to do?

"Elder Wu Yangzi has once smithed a [Golden Armored Cloak] which, unlike ordinary armor, could be concealed beneath one's skin. If this corpse has the Golden Armored Cloak beneath his skin, there will be no doubt that he's indeed Elder Wu Yangzi!" Zhao Bingxu stood up and observed the corpse carefully.

"Golden Armored Cloak?" Yuan Hong and the others were taken aback.

They had never heard of this before.

"That's right. Zhao Bingxu nodded as he gathered a surge of sword qi on his fingertip and lightly sliced the corpse's skin.

Si la!

A small incision was made on the corpse's skin, revealing a

gleaming golden armor within.

"This is indeed the Golden Armored Cloak! There's no doubt about it, this is the remains of Elder Wu Yangzi!" Upon seeing the yellow shine beneath the corpse's skin, Zhao Bingxu clenched his fists tightly in agitation, and his breathing hastened.

A corpse could be faked, but it was impossible for the Golden Armored Cloak to be faked. This was because its forging method had already long disappeared from the face of the earth!

There was only one possibility given that the corpse before him was wearing it—he must be Wu Yangzi!

Chapter 739 His Name is Zhang Xuan

"It's true?"

"That's great..."

Upon hearing School Head Zhao's confirmation on the matter, the faces of Yuan Hong and the others flushed crimson in agitation.

As 6-star pinnacle blacksmiths, they understood the significance of the words "Wu Yangzi" to Hongyuan Empire.

Back then, when this esteemed elder disappeared without a trace, a huge turmoil broke out in the Blacksmith Guild. Countless men stepped forth to lead the search for his whereabouts, but their efforts ended in futility. Who could have thought that the ones who would eventually uncover his traces would be the students of the Master Teacher Academy?

They could already foresee the huge commotion that would occur with the announcement regarding the discovery of this corpse. This would boost the Blacksmith School's prestige amongst the students and blacksmiths.

"You have done well. I'll have the school reward you handsomely for your accomplishments!" Zhao Bingxu nodded in commendation as he gazed at the students before him, proud of them.

To be honest, he had also attempted to uncover Elder Wu Yangzi's trails when he was younger, but he eventually found himself stumbling upon a dead end, leaving him no choice but to give up.

"Thank you, School Head Zhao!" Xing Yuan and the others clasped their fists.

Vice School Head Xiong Bing had thought that it would be difficult for them to succeed when they first applied for the mission, so he didn't bother offering much of a reward. However,

with such great achievement, locating Wu Yangzi's whereabouts and finding his remains, it was natural that the reward should be increased significantly.

"Since you have found Elder Wu Yangzi's body, regarding his heritage..." One of the vice school heads couldn't help but ask anxiously.

Back then, when the esteemed Wu Yangzi disappeared from the world, he didn't leave behind his heritage. This was also part of the reason why after his disappearance, many had searched far and wide for his whereabouts, in hopes of uncovering his heritage.

Since these students were able to find his remains, could they have obtained his heritage as well?

Given their current capability, Wu Yangzi's heritage was no longer crucial to them. They also wouldn't stoop so low as to steal the heritage from the students either, especially given their standing. However, if the Blacksmith School could obtain Wu Yangzi's heritage, it would definitely allow many of their blacksmiths to advance their smithing proficiency. This was beneficial to the entire Blacksmith School.

"We managed to find his heritage... At the same time, I was also accepted as Elder Wu Yangzi's direct disciple. However, I won't be able to make the call to contribute the heritage to the school by myself!"

The one who spoke this time around was Luo Qiqi.

"You found Elder Wu Yangzi's heritage?"

"You can't make the call yourself? True, your group did go through a lot of effort to obtain the heritage. You should indeed discuss among yourselves before coming to a decision."

"Don't worry, if you don't wish to make it public, I promise that no one will be able to make things difficult for you..."

"The Master Teacher Pavilion has its own rules. There will be no

one who would risk bringing the ire of the Master Teacher Pavilion upon themselves for a heritage!"

Upon hearing that the group had obtained the heritage, everyone was astonished. But soon, they nodded in agreement.

The responsibility of master teachers was to impart knowledge and enlighten the masses. But as noble as their mission was, they were still mortal, and they had their own desires and interests. It would be unreasonable to expect them to impart everything they knew selflessly to others.

It was precisely for this reason that there was a classification between direct disciple, normal students, and listening in.

Those who were listening in would only be imparted the bare fundamentals whereas the direct disciples would be taught the most profound of techniques.

This was also the reason why the standing of direct disciples was higher than those listening in, with the latter having to address the former as "senior".

Since Luo Qiqi had become Wu Yangzi's direct disciple and inherited his heritage, it should belong to her. If she was willing to pass it on, that would be goodwill on her part. However, if she was unwilling to do so, they weren't in a position to say anything either.

This was the magnanimity that master teachers should have. Otherwise, how could they be qualified to enlighten the masses?

"Rather than saying our group went through a lot of effort, it would be more accurate to say that that person went through a lot of effort... As long as he agrees, I believe that Qiqi will be more than willing to contribute the heritage to the Blacksmith School!" Realizing that there was some misunderstanding between them, Yu Fei-er quickly stepped forward to explain.

"That person?" Zhao Bingxu, Yuan Hong, and the others glanced

at one another doubtfully.

"Indeed. Not only was that person the one who helped us obtain the heritage, he even saved all of us. If not for him, we might have died within the underground chamber!" Gratitude gleamed in Luo Qiqi's eyes as she spoke.

"We can forgo the rewards that School Head Zhao has promised us as long as he is amply rewarded!" Xing Yuan added.

Even though he was frustrated by the complicated relationship between Princess Yu Fei-er and that fellow, he still felt obliged to repay the other party for saving their lives.

Sensing the earnest tone behind the duo's words, Zhao Bingxu frowned, "What happened? Did you encounter some kind of danger while seeking Elder Wu Yangzi?"

Wu Yangzi's disappearance back then was extremely abrupt, there was no signs or marks left behind, as if he had vanished into thin air. Even Zhao Bingxu, despite his immense authority, could only fathom a guess on the happenings, deducing that the Otherworldly Demons might have been involved in this matter.

But as for the truth, there was no one who could say for sure.

Furthermore, after such a long time had passed, whatever existing danger back then should have already dissipated.

"Dangerous can't possibly summarize what we went through. Elder Wu Yangzi was captured by the Otherworldly Demons back then, and here is a personal note he left behind..." Luo Qiqi nodded as she passed a book over.

This was the notebook which they obtained from Wu Yangzi back in the underground chamber.

Written on it was the happenings in his capture and his experiences with the Otherworldly Demons in the underground chamber.

"This..."

After reading through the note, Zhao Bingxu's eyes narrowed, "Otherworldly Demon puppet? Could it be that... you have met those in the underground chamber?"

"Indeed. Due to a moment of carelessness, we ended up being surrounded, and we were almost killed. Despite the danger, that person stepped forward and saved us. Furthermore, in order to destroy those puppets, he even destroyed the underground chamber, burying himself with them..." Luo Qiqi recounted the affairs that happened that day.

Upon hearing about how that person stood bravely against an Otherworldly Demon puppet to save Luo Qiqi, everyone fell silent.

They tried putting themselves in the other party's shoes, but they realized that it would be difficult for them to put themselves in danger in order to save a mere acquaintance.

Furthermore, that person even handed the heritage over to Luo Qiqi without even taking a glance at it. Very few would be willing to do so if put in his position.

There was no blacksmith who could remain unmoved before Wu Yangzi's heritage, and yet, that person willingly gave the opportunity to Luo Qiqi. It would be hard to find anyone as noble as he was.

As the five school head and vice school heads listened to how that person braved through many Saint realm Otherworldly Demon puppets without regard for his life in order to save Yu Fei-er and the others, their mouths opened wide in astonishment.

"If those Otherworldly Demon puppets were to escape from the underground chamber, they would pose a fatal threat to Huanyu Empire and perhaps even Hongyuan Empire. Many will suffer under their tyranny. His actions have saved all of us. He's... truly a noble person!"

"Indeed. Putting his life on the line, he attracted all of the Otherworldly Demon puppets away and collapsed the underground chamber so as to stop them... Putting the lives of others above his, he's indeed a true master teacher!"

A long moment later, Zhao Bingxu and the others finally spoke up, nodding in admiration and awe for the other party.

To charge into a despairing situation for humanity, there was nothing greater than that!

Unwittingly, they thought of Kong shi.

Back then, Kong shi had established the master teacher occupation for the advancement of mankind.

After tens of thousand years, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe had long disappeared. While the Master Teacher Pavilion had managed to remain true to its aims, the number hot-blooded master teachers who were willing to truly put their life on the line for humanity had been decreasing over the years, perhaps even disappearing entirely.

Who would have known that they would find one right in their Master Teacher Academy!

"He's really a respectable master teacher." Xing Yuan nodded.

"He was the one who helped me obtain this heritage. As long as he gives his consent, I'll contribute it to the Blacksmith School without any hesitation!" Luo Qiqi said.

It was through Zhang shi's blood and sweat that they obtained Wu Yangzi's heritage. If he agrees to it, she would hand it over straight away. Otherwise, even at the risk of her life, she wouldn't divulge a single word about it.

"Judging from how noble that person you spoke of is, I'm sure he'll be more than willing to contribute this valuable knowledge to the masses." Yuan Hong remarked.

"I'm sure he will. He's such a person after all..." After a moment of thought, Luo Qiqi nodded.

Her apothecary teacher might be young, but he wasn't one who was obsessed with gains and losses. Even if she were to seek his permission for this matter, he would surely give his consent without any hesitation.

"I'll contribute Wu Yangzi's heritage to the Blacksmith School then. However, I hope that the school can reward him for his efforts!"

With those words, Luo Qiqi flicked her wrist and took out a book.

It was the secret manual which many would go into a frenzy in order to obtain it, Wu Yangzi's personal smithing technique, [Zither Forging Technique].

"This..."

Flipping through the book casually, Zhao Bingxu could tell that it was authentic instantly, and his eyes reddened in agitation.

The various interpretations and comprehension of smithing in the manual were refreshing and novel. If this could be imparted to the students of the Blacksmith School, their smithing proficiency would definitely be raised by leaps and bounds.

Even Zhao Bingxu himself might be able to surpass his bottleneck and reach higher realms in his smithing with this!

"That person is indeed a great man. He has contributed greatly to humanity. Where is that person now? Is he... still alive?" Zhao Bingxu asked hesitantly.

Luo Qiqi had only said that that person chose to willingly remain in the underground chamber in order to save them, not mentioning whether he had survived that ordeal or not.

If that person was still alive, the Blacksmith School would have to reward him handsomely for his immense contributions. If he

had already passed away... they would ensure that his family members are well taken care of so as to honor his deeds.

"He's alive, of course he's alive!" Not expecting for there to be such a misunderstanding, Luo Qiqi hurriedly clarified. "Not only is he alive, he has also participated in the entrance examination, and he should be a freshman in the academy now!"

They hadn't heard from Zhang Xuan whether he had passed the entrance examination or not, but given his capability, it shouldn't pose a problem to him at all.

"Freshman? You mean to say that that person who saved you... is a freshman of our academy?" Zhao Bingxu was stunned.

The other vice school heads were also dumbstruck by that revelation.

When they heard that that person had selflessly put his life at stake to save them, they had thought that he would be a 5-star master teacher a minimum, or perhaps even beyond that. Who could have thought that it would be a humble freshman in their academy?

"That's right!" Luo Qiqi nodded.

"I see... What is his name then? I'll send someone to find him and convince him to join our Blacksmith School!" Yuan Hong said.

Putting everything aside, just by the fact that he had contributed the Zither Forging Technique to the Blacksmith School would earn him the respect of countless students here.

"He's my apothecary teacher. His name is... Zhang Xuan!" Luo Qiqi announced proudly.

"Zhang Xuan?"

Yuan Hong froze for an instant as his body trembled to that familiar name. With a shaky voice, he asked, "Is that Zhang Xuan you spoke of a young man in his twenties, around this tall, and

has a fair complexion?"

Chapter 740 Meritorious

Upon hearing Vice School Head Yuan's words, Luo Qiqi pondered for a moment before nodding, "Teacher is indeed in his twenties, and he does have fair complexion..."

After cultivating the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, his body became as smooth and flawless as an infant. It wouldn't be inaccurate to describe him as possessing "fair complexion".

"Zhang Xuan, a freshman, and in his twenties..." Yuan Hong felt frenzied.

The person who had just caused immense destruction in the Blacksmith Guild also went by the same name, and the description fits to a T as well...

"What's wrong, Vice School Head Yuan?" Seeing Yuan Hong going into a daze after asking that question, Zhao Bingxu couldn't help but ask doubtfully. "Could it be that you know Zhang shi?"

"I..." Yuan Hong had no idea how he should answer that question. Still in disbelief, he turned to Luo Qiqi and asked once again, "Does Zhang shi has a formidable teacher who is a master teacher beyond 6-star?"

"Are you referring to Yang shi? I'm not too sure about the details, but it does seem like he possesses means beyond a normal 6-star master teacher!" Luo Qiqi nodded.

"Yang shi... Yang Xuan..." Yuan Hong's body shook intensely.

There was no need to ask any further, there was overwhelming evidence to say that the two people described were the same person.

That fellow had reported himself as Yang Xuan's student. He was also a freshman in his twenties, and the names were similar too... No matter how you look at it, they were definitely the same person!

What the heck was this!

As soon as he arrived at the academy, the first thing he did was to destroy the Chamber of Earth Flame before reducing the entire Passageway of Records to ruins, leaving the Blacksmith Guild in tatters.

He thought that he might be a student sent from the other schools to wreak havoc in the Blacksmith School, but who could have thought that he had such a background?

Putting his life on the line to face the Otherworldly Demons alone, giving away Wu Yangzi's heritage without any hesitation... Every single one of these deeds was incredibly noble, leaving those who have heard of them with nothing but awe for him.

A conceited God of Destruction and a selfless master teacher...

How could they possibly be the same person!

This... Was he suffering from dissociative identity disorder?

"What's wrong?" Seeing Yuan Hong's face slowly being reduced to tears, Zhao Bingxu asked once more.

As a 6-star master teacher, Yuan Hong should have at least reached a level where he could conceal his emotions. Why would he still show such a depressed expression?

"It's like this. Didn't I just said that I had something I needed to report to you?" Hearing School Head Zhao's question, Yuan Hong swiftly recovered and clasped his fist.

"Un." Zhao Bingxu nodded. "What is it?"

Previously, right after Vice School Head Xiong spoke, Yuan Hong did say that he had something to report as well.

"That is... the Passageway of Records has collapsed, and half of the Blacksmith Guild has been destroyed..." Yuan Hong's face reddened in embarrassment.

Despite being the person-in-charge of the examination facilities

in the Blacksmith School, the area under his jurisdiction ended up being destroyed by a record challenger. He would probably become a laughingstock for the other vice school heads.

"The Passageway of Records and half of the Blacksmith Guild has been destroyed? Is there an attack by the Otherworldly Demons?" Zhao Bingxu's eyebrows shot up in alarm.

As they had been busy discussing inside the office, and communication with the external world had been terminated, they hadn't received news about the matter yet.

However, the Passageway of Records was constructed and reinforced with incredibly resilient materials, allowing it to withstand the trial of time over several millennia. Unless there was an invasion by the Otherworldly Demons, how could it collapse all of the sudden?

"That's not it!" Not expecting School Head Zhao to actually make such a connection, Yuan Hong hurriedly clarified it awkwardly. "Someone came to challenge the Chamber of Earth Flame..."

Yuan Hong swiftly went through the happenings of the incident.

"You are saying that... someone survived in the Chamber of Earth Flame for over two hours? And when he finally came out, the chamber collapsed, and the Earth Flame Hearts were completely depleted?

"On top of that, he used Earth Flame to substitute as a catalyst for the Earth Flame Hearts and successfully repaired the chamber. However, as soon as you stepped in... it exploded?"

...

After hearing Yuan Hong's recount, the other vice school heads stared at him as if they had seen a ghost.

To survive the blistering heat in the Chamber of Earth Flame for two hours straight, and even recreating it with Earth Flame... Are you for real?

Was that even something a 4-star master teacher was capable of?

One must know that even they, as 6-star master teachers, were incapable of doing the same!

"Yes..." Yuan Hong nodded. "The person who caused the commotion also goes by the name of... Zhang Xuan, and he's a freshman as well."

"His name is Zhang Xuan? Could they be the same person?"

"To be able to save his peers from the Otherworldly Demon puppets and destroy the underground chamber to trap them down there, Zhang shi possessed both courage and wits. Only a someone like him could possess such great capability!"

...

The other vice school heads remarked.

If someone had told them that a person had endured two hours in the Chamber of Earth Flame and destroyed half of the Blacksmith Guild, they would have never believed it.

However, after hearing about the incredible exploits of Zhang shi, these feats seemed to be nothing much in comparison.

"The Chamber of Earth Flame serves to test the resilience of one's physical body. The longer one can remain in there, the stronger one's physical body is deemed to be. If the both Zhang shi are the same person, considering that he had inherited Elder Wu Yangzi's heritage and cultivated the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, it wouldn't be too difficult for him to last two hours inside!" Zhao Bingxu nodded.

His first thought upon hearing that someone had lasted two hours in the Chamber of Earth Flame was disbelief as well, but as he recalled the matter regarding Wu Yangzi's heritage, he couldn't help but consider the possibility.

Even though he had never seen the Quintuple Incandescence

Golden Body before, it was famed to be the best physical body cultivation technique in Hongyuan Empire, paving the way for Wu Yangzi to become the best blacksmith here.

"I... I didn't know. I thought that he was intentionally causing trouble, so I demanded him to compensate for the damages..." Hong Yuan said anxiously.

If he had known that Zhang Xuan had really endured the heat in the Chamber of Earth Flame with his own strength, he wouldn't have caused such a fuss.

Ultimately, the Chamber of Earth Flame was a record challenge. If Zhang shi had truly endured the heat in the Chamber of Earth Flame with his own capability, it could only be said that the Chamber of Earth Flame was not sufficiently well-built to match up to his capability... To demand the challenger to pay for the reparation under such circumstances was a massive humiliation for the Blacksmith School.

And if Yuan Hong hadn't asked for compensation, the mess that came afterward wouldn't have occurred either.

"We can't blame him for this issue. There is indeed a huge flaw with the design of the Chamber of Earth Flame, resulting in its inability to hold up in the face of a true expert..." Zhao Bingxu sighed.

"You're right." Yuan Hong nodded. "But now, the damage is no longer limited to just the Chamber of Earth Flame. The entire Passageway of Records and half of the guild has been destroyed. What should we do about that?"

If it had just been the Chamber of Earth Flame, they could easily forgo it. After all, ten high-tier spirit stones wasn't a huge sum for the Blacksmith School. However, the damage had gone way farther than that.

"Regarding that... let's just call off the debt!" After a long

contemplation, Zhao Bingxu waved his hand and sighed.

"Call it off? How can we..." Yuan Hong exclaimed in shock.

If they were to simply call it off, the Blacksmith School would be incurring a debt of several thousand high-tier spirit stones! As rich as they were, that was still an immense burden on them!

"Are you thinking about the loss? His contribution of the Zither Forging Technique to our Blacksmith School goes way farther than a few thousand high-tier spirit stones!" Zhao Bingxu shook his head.

Wu Yangzi's heritage would boost the skills of the members of the Blacksmith School by leaps and bounds. Zhang Xuan's contribution would benefit generations of students to come, and that was worth far more than a few thousand high-tier spirit stones.

If needed, the Blacksmith School was willing to fork out even several ten thousand high-tier spirit stones for Wu Yangzi's heritage if it had to.

The Zither Forging Technique was not only elegant, it made smithing into an art form. This encouraged immersion in their work, allowing them to raise their understanding of smithing subconsciously as they worked.

With this secret manual in hand, the Blacksmith School could very well overtake the Apothecary School within a decade, becoming the number school in Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy!

Even Zhao Bingxu, the head of the Blacksmith School, was incapable of such a feat, so how could such contribution be valued only at a few thousand high-tier spirit stones?

They were on two totally different levels!

Given the immense contributions that Zhang Xuan had made to the school, if they were to continue demanding compensation from

the other party over such a minor matter, wouldn't they make the other students disillusioned about the school?

"Indeed! Not only should we cancel the compensation, we should reward him even!"

"It's only right for us to reward such talents to retain them in our Blacksmith School!"

The other vice school heads expressed their support on the matter as well.

There were many schools in the master teacher, so the competition over talents was extremely rife. No matter what, they had to retain a talent like Zhang Shi in the Blacksmith School and have it become his main supporting occupation. This way, if he were to make his name in the world, the school's reputation would also rise along with his!

On the other hand, Yuan Hong's mouth twitched.

That fellow had nearly destroyed the entire branch, and not only were they not going to penalize him, they were going to reward him even... If that was the case, wouldn't he lose his authority among the students?

Nevertheless, he had no choice but to acknowledge School Head Zhao's words.

Contributing the Zither Forging Technique to the Blacksmith School was indeed a huge merit. Even if Zhang Xuan were to wreak havoc upon the entire Blacksmith School, as long as no students were hurt in the process, his merit could easily wipe off his wrongdoings.

In the end, the core of the Master Teacher Academy lay in its people. As long as they had sufficient talents, the academy could always be rebuilt.

The Master Teacher Pavilion in the higher ranked empires had been assaulted by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe many times,

and its facilities and libraries had been destroyed again and again. However, the heritage of master teachers still lived on, guiding humanity to greater heights.

"Alright, the matter is decided then. Right, didn't you say that he intends to take the 5-star blacksmith examination? Bring him to the Ocean of Weapons then. As long as he clears the examination, I'll take him in as my student..." Zhao Bingxu chuckled.

It would be ideal if he could accept such a genius as his student!

"Yes!" Yuan Hong nodded.

"As for the rest of you, you have done well in the mission as well. I'll obtain a few pills from the Apothecary School for you and conduct a Meridian and Bone Cleansing for you personally!" Zhao Bingxu turned to Luo Qiqi and the others and said.

"Meridian and Bone Cleansing? Thank you, School Head Zhao!" Upon hearing those words, the faces of Luo Qiqi and the others flushed in agitation.

Considering that it was a Meridian and Bone Cleansing by one of the Ten Great Master Teachers, were it to succeed, they would be able to progress from straight to Half-Saint without facing any bottlenecks in their cultivation!

Meridian and Bone Cleansing was an extremely exhausting process. Even a Saint realm expert wouldn't do so easily. In that aspect, this was the best reward they could receive.

It was far better than earning Academic Credits!

"Yuan Hong, you should bring Zhang shi to the examination hall now. Make sure to treat him amiably, don't give him the idea that our Blacksmith School mistreats meritorious students!" Zhao Bingxu instructed sternly.

"Yes!" With a lowered head, Yuan Hong walked out from the office, and a bitter smile emerged on his lips.

When he first arrived at the office, he was still thinking about having the school head to issue a severe punishment to Zhang Xuan... Who could have thought that there would be such a huge turnaround?

How did things turn to this?

Just the thought of it left him extremely stifled within.

Chapter 741 I Am Not a Blacksmith Yet

"What's going on?"

"Did you see that? This fellow cheated in the Chamber of Earth Flame challenge and destroyed the entire area. On top of that, he even intentionally directed the Earth Flame to tear down the Passageway of Records!"

"Is that fellow insane, or is he simply sick of living?"

"I have no clue either, but since it isn't a matter involving us, let's just watch quietly..."

A portion of the guild collapsing was no trifling matter. Before long, a huge crowd had already gathered around the area, each busy asking one another to satisfy their curiosity.

When they learned that it was a freshman who had caused such a huge uproar, pity immediately surfaced in their eyes.

Even if he was tired of living, this wasn't how he should seek the end!

They were in the Master Teacher Academy, not some countryside school. To cause such a mess and be caught personally by Vice School Head Yuan Hong at that... It would be perfectly accurate to say that he was a goner!

Even if he were to spend his life working here, he would never be able to pay off the debt!

"Stand obediently!" Luo Yan glared at the young man coldly.

Knowing that his teacher was truly infuriated by this matter, he dispatched eight experts to guard this fellow. If not for fear that it might reflect badly on them, he would have already had him pummeled!

For a freshman to go about wreaking havoc instead of staying put in the freshman area, he deserved it even if he was expelled from

the academy!

"I don't mean to do anything, I just want to check on the other mechanisms in the Passageway of Records and see if they can be fixed!" Seeing how the other students were so guarded against him as if he was a burglar out to steal their valuables, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

He was also very apologetic that such a situation had occurred.

All he'd wanted to do was take the 5-star blacksmith examination quietly. Never had he thought that he would end up in such a state.

In the end, he allowed greed to get the better of him. Earth Flame Hearts were extremely valuable commodities, and who knows how long it would be before he could encounter another one?

Furthermore, he also hadn't thought that the renowned Earth Flame Heart's reputation would precede its capability. He had already tried to limit himself, thinking that he would stop once his soul reached ten meters, but it coincidentally broke down right when he reached that mark.

And as for the repairs, how could he have known that the esteemed Blacksmith School would end up skimming on a formation plate used to draw Earth Flame...

But it was all too late now. The only thing he could do now was try to salvage the situation as best he could. Otherwise, if he were to really incur a debt of three thousand high-tier spirit stones, he would end up wasting many years here!

"You are thinking of repairing the other mechanisms? Let me tell you, if you dare to lay even a finger on them, don't blame me for getting nasty!" Seeing that the other party lacked the slightest remorse for his actions, attempting to put his demonic claws on the other mechanisms as well, Luo Yan's rage immediately flurried.

'What the hell is this!

'If it wasn't for your "fixing", would the Blacksmith Guild have been reduced to ruins?

'If you don't have the ability to fix it, don't even try it in the first place!'

"I can really fix them! What happened a moment ago... was just an accident!" Zhang Xuan hurriedly explained. "I can prove it to you. Bring me a higher quality formation plate, and I'll fix the Chamber of Earth Flame before your eyes..."

"You... You're seeking death!" Seeing how that fellow was still prattling on despite all he had done, Luo Yan's rage finally reached its breaking point. A powerful aura gushed forth as he thrust his palm toward the conceited fellow before him.

Hu la!

As a 5-star pinnacle blacksmith, his cultivation had already reached Transcendent Mortal 8-dan Ethereal Treading realm. His palm thrust was bursting with might, threatening to tear apart the fabric of space.

"Stop!" Just as the palm was about to reach Zhang Xuan, a loud bellow suddenly sounded from afar. A silhouette rushed forward, and with a light flick of his hand, he dispelled the zhenqi that Luo Yan had gathered behind his strike.

Deng deng deng deng!

Luo Yan's face reddened, and he was pushed several steps back. A dull pain resonated throughout his body as his zhenqi fell into disarray with his offense abruptly dispelled.

Upon catching a clear sight of the figure who had stopped his offense, Luo Yan froze.

"Teacher..."

It was no other than his teacher, who was dying to strangle Zhang Xuan a moment ago!

Wasn't his teacher extremely furious with this fellow? Why would he stop him from teaching this fellow a lesson?

Bewildered, he was just about to ask his teacher about the matter when the latter suddenly turned around to look at the young man behind him with a bright smile on his face. "Are you alright? Are you injured? How dare that unfilial student of mine lay his hands on you! Shall I teach him a lesson in your stead?"

"Ah?" Hearing those words, Luo Yan's body staggered from shock.

What was this madness unfolding before him?

Was the person he was seeing really his teacher, the vice head of the Blacksmith School?

Wasn't he dying to strangle that fellow to death a moment ago? Why did his attitude suddenly make a 180-degree change...

"Didn't you say that Vice School Head Yuan is extremely angry?"

"Given that the branch has suffered such severe damage, who wouldn't be angry in his position? But that response of his... It doesn't seem like he's angry at all?"

"That is a gross understatement. Look carefully, don't you feel that he's fawning over that freshman?"

"Fawning? You are exaggerating! Vice School Head Yuan is a 6-star pinnacle master teacher and blacksmith! With such esteemed standing, is there anyone in the school he needs to fawn over?"

...

All of the students who had gathered for the commotion were also dumbfounded.

With the branch suffering such catastrophic damage, they'd thought that the freshman behind it would be heavily punished to send out a stern warning to the others. But if that was the case, what was with that declaration to teach Luo Yan a lesson?

That bright smile and that attitude... No matter how one looked at it, surely the vice school head was trying to fawn over that fellow!

"Teach him a lesson? There's no need for that; I'm fine!"

They weren't the only ones who were baffled by the situation, even Zhang Xuan, the perpetrator of this entire incident, was confused by the abrupt twist in the plot.

Didn't this elder march off furiously to the school head's office to bring forth a heavy penalty upon him? Why would he suddenly treat him so kindly?

"It's good that you're fine!" Yuan Hong heaved a sigh of relief. Following which, he turned his gaze to Luo Yan and bellowed, "What are you waiting for? Hurry up and apologize to Zhang shi!"

Ever since leaving the school head's office, Yuan Hong had rushed all the way back here, fearing that the students might have laid their hands on Zhang Xuan. And it was fortunate that he did.

If that palm were to land on Zhang Xuan, it would strike out whatever goodwill he had for the Blacksmith School along with it.

If that were to happen, how were they going to keep him in the Blacksmith School?

One must know that the school head had already expressed his interest in accepting him as his direct disciple! If he were to reject the Blacksmith School due to Luo Yan's slap, how was he going to explain this matter to the school head?

This unfilial student of his had nearly gotten him into deep trouble!

"Apologize? I..." Luo Yan couldn't help but feel that the world had gone bonkers. "Teacher, why should I apologize to him? He destroyed the Passageway of Records and half of the Blacksmith Guild..."

"Enough!"

But before Luo Yan could finish his words, Yuan Hong interrupted furiously. Waving his hands in annoyance, he roared sharply, "Return back to your quarters and reflect on what you have done! Without my orders, you are not to leave your room!"

'Just apologize when I tell you to, do you need to spout so much nonsense?

'Are you only going to be content when you land me into deep trouble?'

"Teacher..." Hearing that his teacher was going to ground him for no good reason, Luo Yan seethed with indignation, unable to accept what was happening before him. At the same time, the others in the area also glanced at one another, uncomprehending of what Yuan Hong was up to.

"What are you all standing around for? The group over there, take Luo Yan back to his quarters!" Yuan Hong instructed sternly.

After issuing those orders, Yuan Hong turned his gaze back to Zhang Xuan and said politely, "Zhang shi, aren't you intending to take the 5-star blacksmith examination? Allow me to bring you to the Ocean of Weapons!"

"Ocean of Weapons? But... I don't have any Academic Credits..." Zhang Xuan uttered in bewilderment.

'What is wrong with this fellow? Did he bump his head somewhere?

'It is one thing to teach Luo Yan a lesson, but to bring me to the Ocean of Weapons as well?

'I thought that the Ocean of Weapons is only open to those with ample Academic Credits!'

"You don't have any Academic Credits? Don't worry, that's not a problem at all! The group over there, wait there for a moment. Luo

Yan, take out your Academic Credit Token and give Zhang shi two..." ordered Yuan Hong as he turned to the departing group.

"I..." Hearing those words, Luo Yan nearly collapsed burst into tears from sheer indignation.

'Why should I?

'That fellow caused a huge mess over here, but not only are you sparing him from punishment, you are even asking me to give him Academic Credits? Isn't this favoritism too much!'

"Stop wasting time, hurry up!" Yuan Hong frowned.

"Alright."

Nevertheless, Luo Yan dared not disobey the commands of his teachers, so he obediently passed his Academic Credit Card over.

Students were allowed to transfer Academic Credits amongst themselves as well. Given that Zhang Xuan hadn't received his identity token yet, it went without saying that he hadn't received an Academic Credit Card as well. However, such a small issue couldn't possibly stumble a vice school head.

With a flick of his wrist, Yuan Hong took out an empty card and transferred two points into it from Luo Yan's card.

"Alright, Zhang shi. We have the Academic Credits now, so let's go!"

After doing what had to be done, Yuan Hong turned to Zhang Xuan with a smile and gestured for him to head forward.

Zhang Xuan blinked in a daze, overwhelmed by the happenings before him. He pointed to the rubble in the area blankly and asked, "This... Don't I have to compensate for this?"

"You don't have to worry about it. This isn't your fault, so you won't have to compensate for this. I'll have someone fix it up later," Yuan Hong replied.

"This... Alright then." Even though Zhang Xuan had no idea what

was going on, he was still relieved to hear that he was excused from payment.

Three thousand high-tier spirit stones was way beyond his means. It would be best if he could be spared from compensation.

"This..."

"Is this really the austere Vice School Head Yuan that I know?"

"What kind of play is this?"

"It was just a moment ago that Vice School Head Yuan looked as if he was going to tear that fellow apart. Yet, in just a few short moments, he suddenly became like that..."

...

Taking that scene into sight, the master teachers gathered in the area were trembling in frenzy.

This was a branch of the Blacksmith Guild! That fellow had caused the collapse of half of the entire building, and yet, not only was he not criticized for it, he was even granted so many privileges.

This was way too abnormal!

Such a feeling resonated particularly strongly with Li Xuan amidst the crowd. Her body was trembling uncontrollably, and she nearly fainted from the sight.

She had been the one to show that fellow around ever since he'd arrived at the Blacksmith Guild, and all this time, she had thought of him as a conceited and naive freshman... For such a person to actually win Vice School Head Yuan's favor, what was this world turning into...

...

Despite wracking his brain, Zhang Xuan was unable to find any logical reason as to why the attitude of the elder before him would change so abruptly. In the end, he could only attribute it to Elder

Mo and Pavilion Master Mo's halo. Sighing deeply, he followed Yuan Hong to the other half of the Blacksmith Guild, which had, fortunately, remained intact despite the previous explosion.

Before long, he was standing before a towering door.

"Zhang shi, this is the entrance to the Ocean of Weapons. To take the 5-star blacksmith examination, you just have to place your Academic Credit Card and 4-star emblem on the stone pedestal over there and step through the door, and you will be brought to the corresponding examination area." With a gentle smile, Yuan Hong gestured.

Just like the Passageway of Records, the Ocean of Weapons was also a complex mechanism created using many unique materials. In order to activate it, one would require sufficient Academic Credits in their card, as well as an emblem a rank lower than the examination one was going to take.

With these two objects, one would be able to activate the mechanism and take the corresponding examination. This was an extremely efficient system which spared the Blacksmith Guild from having to devote too much manpower into manning its examination facilities.

"I need a 4-star emblem for the examination?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"Indeed. Since Zhang shi is here to take the 5-star examination, I believe you should already have the 4-star emblem in your possession. Don't worry, any emblem distributed by the Blacksmith Guild is usable here!" Yuan Hong explained, thinking that Zhang Xuan was worried that the blacksmith emblem which he'd obtained elsewhere might not be usable here.

"This..." Zhang Xuan scratched his head awkwardly. "Is an emblem really required? What do I have to do if I don't have one?"

"Don't have one?" Yuan Hong froze. "What do you mean by that?"

Zhang Xuan blushed in embarrassment.

"That is... I have yet to take a blacksmith examination. The truth is that I am actually not a blacksmith yet..."

Chapter 742 Taking the Blacksmith Examination

"You aren't a blacksmith yet?" Yuan Hong's body swayed weakly from sheer shock, and he nearly spewed a mouthful of blood onto the other party's face.

The other master teachers who had gathered in the area out of curiosity also had their eyes bulging in astonishment.

'You aren't a blacksmith, and yet you are here to take the 5-star examination? And you still dare to say that you aren't here to cause trouble?'

Blacksmithing was a part of the Upper Nine Paths, one of the most prestigious occupations in the continent. Countless had devoted innumerable years of their lives to refining their skills, forsaking sleep and meals just to be accepted into this esteemed organization.

Even the most talented of blacksmiths would require a decade of training before they could challenge the 5-star organization. Those who were less talented might even take fifty years just to prepare for it!

And yet, a twenty-year-old fellow who wasn't even a 1-star blacksmith actually wanted to challenge the 5-star examination?

'Did you think that blacksmith is an occupation which you could master on a whim?

'You are taking it way too lightly!'

"I have learnt smithing on my private time, I just haven't had the time to take the examination yet..." Noticing everyone's dumbfounded gaze, realization struck Zhang Xuan, and he hurriedly came up with an explanation. "Since that's the case, why don't I start from the 1-star examination? Is it possible to take the 1-star examination here? Or do I have to take the apprentice

examination first?"

Even though Zhang Xuan's smithing capability was above even that of Wu Yangzi, he had never taken any blacksmith examination before. In terms of ranking, he was currently even beneath that of an apprentice, let alone a blacksmith.

"Apprentice..." Hearing those words, Yuan Hong's lips twitched, and he grabbed his face in frustration.

If he hadn't witnessed this sight for himself, he would never have believed it to be true.

To think that a person who wasn't even an apprentice yet would come to the Blacksmith School and declare that he was going to take the 5-star examination. On top of that, he even created a huge fuss in the school, collapsing the Passageway of Records along with half of the entire branch...

More importantly... despite all of this, one of the Ten Great Master Teachers, Zhao Bingxu, was still interested in taking him as his direct disciple!

All of this, he had seen with his own eyes. But even so, he couldn't help but feel as though he was in a dream.

"There's no need for you to take the apprentice examination, you can take the 1-star examination straight... For the time being, just try to pass the 1-star examination first. As for 5-star... we'll talk about it in the future!" Suppressing the frustration he was feeling, Yuan Hong turned to the master teacher crowd behind and asked, "Does any of you have an apprentice emblem?"

As a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith in the Blacksmith School, even his weakest student was a 5-star blacksmith at the minimum. As a result, he didn't have any spare apprentice emblems with him.

"Apprentice emblem?"

"Is there likely to be anyone with an apprentice emblem in the Blacksmith School?"

...

The crowd in the area shook their heads.

Most of those gathered around were 5-star blacksmiths, and even the weakest of the crowd was a 4-star at the minimum. As such, it would be difficult for them to find an apprentice emblem all of the sudden.

"This..." Yuan Hong looked around awkwardly.

What the heck was this!

To think that a day would come where a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith like him would end up having to look for an apprentice emblem, and fail to find one at that...

"Vice School Head Yuan, I have one here!"

At that moment, a timid voice suddenly sounded. Zhang Xuan turned around and saw Li Xuan, the female receptionist who had been bringing him around previously, stepping forward and offering her emblem.

While she was working at the Blacksmith School, she wasn't too involved in the occupation. As a result, she was still an apprentice blacksmith at the moment.

"Good..." Yuan Hong heaved a sigh of relief.

Taking the emblem, he imprinted Zhang Xuan's name on it before passing it to the latter.

"Zhang Xuan, this shall be your apprentice emblem. With this, you should be able to activate the Ocean of Weapons and take the 1-star blacksmith examination."

"Thank you!" Zhang Xuan took the emblem and nodded.

He walked up to the stone pedestal, and just as he was about to place his emblem and Academic Credit Card on it, he suddenly recalled something and turned around. "If I were to pass the 1-star examination, would I have to expend more Academic Credits if I

wanted to continue taking the 2-star examination?"

"If you remain in the Ocean of Weapons, you won't have to expend any more Academic Credits. However, once you step out of the doors, you will have to pay more Academic Credits if you want to enter once more and take the examination again," Yuan Hong replied.

With two Academic Credits, one could activate the Ocean of Weapons once. As long as the Ocean of Weapons remained activated, there would be no need for one to expend any more Academic Credits to re-activate it for the subsequent examinations.

In a sense, it was like paying for a ticket to the museum. As long as the entrance fee was paid, one could remain within until closing time. It was only after leaving the museum that one would have to repurchase another ticket to enter its premises once more.

Upon hearing that he would have to expend more Academic Credits to enter the Ocean of Weapons once more if he were to leave the area, Zhang Xuan immediately asked worriedly, "I won't have to expend any more Academic Credits as long as I remain within? Then... once I clear the 1-star blacksmith examination, can I proceed on with the 2-star examination?"

The two Academic Credits he currently had didn't come easily. He would have to spend a great deal of effort in earning more Academic Credits if he had to spend two for each rank promotion.

Even if the elder before him was willing to finance him, he would still feel guilty taking the Academic Credits of others for his own use, especially considering how valuable they were!

On top of that, if he were to accept the favor of others without giving an equivalent return, he would owe a karmic debt to the other party.

The reason Zhang Xuan had been reluctant to accept the favor of others for free all along was due to the messy implications that

came along with it. If possible, he would like to avoid it for as long as he could.

"Of course you can. However, the Ocean of Weapons will only remain activated for four hours regardless of which examination you are taking. Regardless of whether you are able to successfully forge a weapon or not, you will be evicted from the premises once time is up... I don't think that you will have sufficient time to challenge the other examinations after clearing the 1-star examination!" Yuan Hong explained.

The underlying motive behind the creation of the Ocean of Weapons was to accommodate for a greater number of students in taking the blacksmith examination. Given that, if they were to allow students to camp inside the facility after paying two Academic Credits, wouldn't that be contrary to its primary purpose?

As such, a time limit of four hours was imposed on the system. Regardless of how one's progress in the examination was, one would be evicted without fail once the time was up, even if their weapon was already on the verge of completion.

If a student were to deem that four hours was insufficient for them to clear the examination, the student could always pay more Academic Credits to extend their time. In this case, an Academic Credit would correspond to an additional two hours.

If the student successfully cleared the examination, the Ocean of Weapons would distribute a new corresponding emblem. Otherwise, they would leave empty-handed.

Since Zhang Xuan had two Academic Credits, he would be allowed to stay within the Ocean of Weapons for four hours. However, weapon smithing was an extremely lengthy process. Four hours might be sufficient for him to smith a weapon to clear the 1-star examination, but to be able to smith another one for the 2-star examination in that limited time... It didn't seem too

plausible.

Besides, smithing was an extremely laborious process that consumed an immense amount of zhenqi. Considering Zhang Xuan's current cultivation, just smithing a single weapon could easily consume up more than half of his zhenqi capacity, so even if there was sufficient time, it would be nigh impossible for him to smith two weapons consecutively.

As such, while Vice School Head Yuan thought that it was good that Zhang Xuan was driven, he didn't think that it was a feasible idea.

Even he, as a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith, could only smith two to three weapons within four hours. Anything more than that was impossible.

Unlike pills, weapons, regardless of their grade, require ceaseless hammering and refinement in order to shape and refine it.

"Four hours? Alright then." Hearing that he only had this amount of time, Zhang Xuan nodded.

After clarifying everything, he placed his blacksmith apprentice emblem and Academic Credit Card on the stone pedestal, and with a bright surge of light, the doors to the Ocean of Weapons opened.

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan walked in.

The Ocean of Weapons seemed to operate via a mechanism somewhat similar to the Passageway of Records. The room Zhang Xuan stepped into was completely dark, and with an abrupt rumbling beneath his feet, he was transported to a hall.

Placed within the hall were all kinds of ores and metals. There was also a large cauldron and furnace by the side.

"This is supposed to be... an illusion?" Zhang Xuan couldn't help but mutter in awe. Taking a swift glance around him, he realized that everything in this room was extremely vivid and detailed, making it hard to discern it from reality.

Previously, the female receptionist, Li Xuan, had told him that the Ocean of Weapons utilized an Illusion Formation in order to simulate a lifelike smithing experience. This was indeed what was happening to Zhang Xuan right now. Everything around him was fake, regardless of how real it all looked.

Taking a look around him, Zhang Xuan saw a pile of books on the table before him. He walked up to it and flipped through them casually. Written in them were the smithing methods of various weapons.

Examinees could pick any one of these smithing methods for the examination if they wanted to, but this wasn't a compulsory criterion for the examination. As long as the weapon they smithed reached a certain grade, they would be deemed to have cleared the examination.

"I only have four hours. I must hurry so that I can take the 5-star examination..."

Knowing that Academic Credits didn't come easily, Zhang Xuan wasn't content with just clearing the 1-star examination. It would be best if he could clear the 5-star examination in a single go so that he wouldn't have to return here again.

'Thus... it would be best for the weapon I smith to be as simple as possible so as to minimize the time spent on them!'

There was a clear difference in the difficulty between forging a metal ingot into a sword and hammer, and the time required for the both of them would be different as well.

'Unlike pill forging where each ingredient must be carefully prepared in order to forge a satisfactory pill, there's no need for me to be too thorough in the forging of the weapon. Since only the grade of the weapon is being assessed here, there's no need for me to pursue perfection...'

A weapon's grade was determined by factors such as its

resilience, flexibility, sharpness, medium for zhenqi, and such.

Aesthetics took a secondary role in determining the grade of the weapon.

While going through the additional effort of hammering the weapon into the perfect shape and size would boost the utility of the weapon as well, this wasn't a vital aspect of the blacksmith examination.

Since that was the case... there would be no need for Zhang Xuan to spend additional effort on shaping the metal ingot.

As long as he were to take careful note of the proportion of metal used in creating the alloy, as well as the refinement and quenching process, he should be able to create a decent weapon.

After browsing through the books, Zhang Xuan frowned.

"It'll take too long to hammer the metal ingot into the shapes depicted in these books..."

Not only would it be hard to do so given his lack of practice in hammering, more importantly, he also didn't have the time to waste on it either.

If he were to follow the smithing process listed in any of the books, it would be impossible for him to successfully smith any weapons without at least two hours of effort.

If that was going to be it, he wouldn't even have enough time to clear the 2-star examination!

"Forget it, I should just start first!"

Tossing the book aside, Zhang Xuan swiftly examined the eight ores and metals on the table as he swiftly simulated the various combinations of alloys he could make with them.

Having learned the Heaven's Path Smith Art, his understanding of smithing was already beyond most 6-star pinnacle blacksmiths. While the ores and metals before him were inferior materials that

were suited only for smithing low-tier weapons, as long as he were to complement their strengths well, he would still be able to create a decent weapon.

"Alright, this should do!" Zhang Xuan muttered as a confident smile crept onto his lips.

With a light flick of his wrist, the eight metals and ores immediately rose from the table and flew into the searing furnace.

Tzzzzzz!

As Zhang Xuan infused his zhenqi into the furnace, it began to glow crimson. The ores and metals swiftly melted and flowed out of the furnace from a groove by the side.

"Synthesize!"

With another flick of his wrist, the metallic fluid separated into eight distinct fluids, and they began synthesizing with one another through a series of sequences.

Chapter 743 Is It Too Late to Practice

With nimble movements from his fingers, Zhang Xuan precisely manipulated the metallic fluids with his zhenqi.

Those metallic fluids clashed with one another in midair, producing resounding melodic metallic clangs reminiscent of the music from a keyboard.

If a blacksmith were to be present here, he would surely be left with his mouth agape upon seeing this sight.

This was no longer smithing but a performance! It was a melody perfectly aligned with nature!

The reason Wu Yangzi's Zither Forging Technique was so sought after was due to its alignment with nature, making the arduous smithing a pleasurable activity. However, the smithing technique that Zhang Xuan was utilizing here was clearly far more profound than the Zither Forging Technique!

Not only was it an enjoyment to the eyes and the ears, one might even find one's soul resonating in pleasure to it.

Heaven's Path Smith Art!

Hu hu hu!

Before long, the eight metallic fluids were completely synthesized with one another, forming a solid alloy. Following which, Zhang Xuan threw the alloy into the water trough by the side.

Tz la!

As soon as the searing metal alloy came into contact with the water, steam immediately rose from the water surface.

This was the final step of smithing, quenching!

Typically, smithing consisted of three steps—synthesizing the metals and ores into an alloy, forging the alloy into its intended form, and quenching the weapon to strengthen the material.

Zhang Xuan had jumped from the first phase right into the third phase, skipping the second phase.

In smithing, the forging phase was extremely important. If a weapon was forged properly, it could enhance its grade as well.

Skipping the second phase meant that his work couldn't be considered as a true weapon, and thus, its grade would take a steep fall. However, it also spared him from the most arduous and lengthy process of hammering his weapon into its intended form, thus significantly speeding up his smithing process.

Hu!

The searing alloy caused the calm water in the trough to bubble furiously. After some time, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, retrieving the alloy from the water.

Timing was essential for quenching. The duration for which a weapon was immersed into a quenching fluid would affect the quality of the end product.

Zhang Xuan had used eight different types of ores and metals to create his alloy, each with vastly different properties. While they could serve to complement each other's strengths, if he couldn't grasp the perfect timing for the quenching, it could introduce an imbalance within the weapon, causing the various metals and ores to hinder the functions of one another. If that were to happen, the resulting alloy would be severely weakened, turning it into a failed product.

"Alright, this... should be it..."

Having completed the quenching process, Zhang Xuan glanced at the metal lump in his palm and scratched his head awkwardly.

If he were to take this metal lump out and call it a weapon, he would surely be mocked by the other blacksmiths, and his reputation would plummet. Fortunately, he was only in a simulation.

Sighing deeply, he walked up to the grading pedestal and placed the metal lump on it.

The grading pedestal served to gauge the quality of the weapon smithed, and as long as the weapon achieved the required grade, the examinee would be deemed to have cleared the examination.

Weng!

A light buzz sounded, and a red light glowed.

Following which, a mechanic voice announced, "Using the most basic Lava Stone, White Steel, Black Pebble... the examinee has managed to smith a Phantom low-tier weapon. Congratulations, you have passed the 1-star blacksmith examination!"

"This metal lump has reached Phantom low-tier? Not bad..." Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

In truth, this was his first time smithing, so he didn't have a precise gauge of how he had fared. To think that this lump of metal would be considered as a Phantom low-tier weapon!

Weapons could be divided into five tiers—God, Saint, Spirit, Phantom, and Mortal.

The criterion for clearing the 1-star blacksmith examination was to smith a Mortal pinnacle weapon. Even though the weapon Zhang Xuan had smithed using the Heaven's Path Smith Art was crude, bearing no semblance to a weapon whatsoever, it was still graded as a Phantom low-tier weapon due to the quality of its alloy.

If it were to be properly forged into a weapon, it could easily reach Phantom intermediate-tier or even high-tier.

After clearing the 1-star examination, Zhang Xuan spoke up without any hesitation.

"I request to challenge the 2-star blacksmith examination!"

Ji ya ya!

The entire area abruptly darkened, and the rumbling of

mechanisms whirring into action sounded. By the time the area lit up once more, he was already in another hall.

The entire layout was similar to the 1-star examination hall, but the area was visibly larger. There was a larger variety of ores and metals placed on the table in the room, and most of them were higher grade and rarer than the ones offered in the 1-star examination.

"Time to start work again!"

After swiftly examining the selection of ores and metals, Zhang Xuan picked 17 of them and threw them into the furnace. Working as he had previously, another metal lump was soon standing in front of him before long.

This metal lump looked even more horrendous than the previous one smithed. It was completely black, and no one would ever be able to make a correlation between it and a weapon.

This was the result of skipping the forging phase of the smithing process.

The forging process was essential to giving shape to the alloy. If one wanted a sword, one would have to hammer it into a sword. If one wanted a dagger, one would have to hammer it into a dagger.

However, putting aside the fact that this phase was extremely time-consuming, hammering was also a skill that one could only master through hands-on experience. With no prior experience whatsoever, it would be nigh impossible for Zhang Xuan to shape the weapons properly even if he were to attempt it in earnest.

Since that was the case, he decided to skip it altogether.

Once again, he placed the metal lump on the grading pedestal.

Weng!

With a brilliant flash of red light, a mechanical voice announced, "... the examinee has managed to smith a Phantom intermediate-

tier weapon. Congratulations, you have passed the 2-star blacksmith examination!"

After clearing the 2-star blacksmith examination, Zhang Xuan immediately moved on to the 3-star.

An hour later, taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan said, "I request to challenge the 5-star blacksmith examination!"

After challenging four examinations consecutively, he was starting to feel a little drained despite his pure zhenqi.

Hu la!

The mechanisms rumbled into action once more, and an even larger room came into sight.

"They are all actually the same hall, it's just my perception of it that has changed..."

After undergoing the 'venue switching' procedure several times, Zhang Xuan soon realized that despite the various differences among the examination halls, the location where he was hadn't changed at all.

In the first place, the examination halls were only a simulation created by the Ocean of Weapons, not a real location. As such, changing the venue wasn't a difficult job,

"Ashenstar Rock, Purpletopaz Metal, Greendust Stone... The materials offered in this examination sure are far better than the ones in the previous examinations..." Zhang Xuan remarked in awe as he examined the selection of ores and metals in the room.

There were plenty of rare materials in the previous four examinations as well, but they paled in comparison to the current spread before him.

Both the Ashenstar Rock and the Purpletopaz Metal were materials which Transcendent Mortal experts would kill to get their hands on. With them, they could forge top-notch weapons.

However, these superior materials did little to alleviate the grimness on Zhang Xuan's face. While better materials did allow for the forging of better weapons, the criterion to clearing the examination was rising at an even faster pace.

To clear the 5-star blacksmith examination, he would have to smith a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon. It was impossible to smith a weapon of that tier with just good materials in hand!

More importantly, one had to wield incredible control over the metals and ores and command an extremely high understanding of the quenching process. Otherwise, the slightest mistake made could result in the wastage of these precious materials.

Hu hu hu!

Zhang Xuan's hands went through the various metals and ores nimbly, synthesizing them together one by one. Unlike previous times, he was working with the metals and ores in the furnace this time around. As such, he had to regulate the temperature in the furnace through his zhenqi simultaneously.

Each metal and ore had its own melting point. In order to create a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon, each material had to be processed carefully to bring out the finest properties within it in the resulting alloy, so the temperature had to be carefully regulated in the synthesis phase.

Soon, just as Zhang Xuan's zhenqi was just about to be completely depleted, he finally finished synthesizing the last ore into the alloy.

Exhaling deeply, Zhang Xuan threw the metal lump into the water trough by the side.

"Quench!"

Tzzzzz!

A dense layer of mist formed around the water trough, concealing it from sight. Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight to

keep a close eye on even the most trivial of changes in the metal lump, and as its quality finally reached its peak, he quickly took it out.

Based on his experience in the previous examinations, he learned that it was easier for him to grasp the condition of the quenching process through his Eye of Insight, thus further enhancing the quality of the final product.

"Test!"

Once again, Zhang Xuan placed the metal lump on the grading pedestal.

Weng!

A mechanical voice announced, "... the examinee has managed to smith a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon. Congratulations, you have passed the 5-star blacksmith examination!"

"I've passed the examination!" Seeing that it was a success, Zhang Xuan's body finally gave into exhaustion, and he fell weakly onto the ground.

Even though he had skipped the hammering stage, it was still tough work controlling the flames in the furnace with his zhenqi. At this point, his zhenqi was nearly completely depleted.

It was fortunately that he had still succeeded eventually.

"I should heal up first." Sitting on the ground, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and a jade box appeared in his hands.

Opening the jade box, he immediately felt a gush of incredibly pure spiritual energy blowing at him; it felt as if small needles were pricking his skin, creating a tingling sensation.

A translucent stone sat inside the box.

This was Zhang Xuan's first time using a high-tier spirit stone.

Those whose cultivation was too low would be unable to assimilate the pure spiritual energy within a high-tier spirit stones

into their body. Even if they could absorb it, the spiritual energy would still leak from the minuscule pores in their meridians.

The meridians within the human body was similar to a sandpit in some ways. There were many fine pores in them such that while thick and viscous mud could flow through it, pure water would usually seep right through those pores, resulting in immense wastage.

In this analogy, the pure water would be referring to the concentrated spiritual energy within a high-tier spirit stone.

Spiritual energy, in its purest form, was extremely fine, to the point that it could easily seep through the smallest openings. Even if an ordinary human were to try to absorb the spiritual energy within a high-tier spirit stone, they wouldn't be able to retain the slightest bit of it in their body.

Only upon reaching Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Chrysalis realm would the openings in one's body be sealed like a cocoon, forming a Seamless Body. Only then would one be able to absorb the spiritual energy within a high-tier spirit stone to strive for greater heights.

Zhang Xuan was currently only at Cosmos Bridge realm, three realms away from reaching Chrysalis realm. Typically speaking, even if he had a high-tier spirit stone in his possession, he shouldn't be able to use it.

However, having cultivated Heaven's Path zhenqi, his body had already been reformed by it, granting him a physical body far stronger than other cultivators. On top of that, he had also reached the Second Incandescence of the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body. This granted him enhanced control over his body, allowing him to seal his pores to retain the fine spiritual energy from the high-tier spirit stone within his body.

Gu gu gu gu!

As the pure spiritual energy circulated in Zhang Xuan's body as

per the Heaven's Path Divine Art, it was swiftly converted into zhenqi before being deposited in his dantian.

His depleted dantian swiftly filled up, reaching full capacity within thirty minutes.

"As expected of a high-tier spirit stone, I was able to recover swiftly!" Zhang Xuan stood up and did some stretches.

If it had been a middle-tier spirit stone or a Spirit Gathering Formation, it would have taken at least several hours for his zhenqi to fully recover. However, through absorbing the spiritual energy in a high-tier spirit stone via the Heaven's Path Divine Art, he was able to recover within just thirty minutes. This was a pace comparable to most pills forged specially for recovering one's zhenqi!

'I still have another hour to go!' Zhang Xuan thought in delight as he returned the high-tier spirit stone to his storage ring.

With an hour left, perhaps he might have enough time to challenge the 6-star blacksmith examination!

While his current cultivation was still a little too low, the depth of his comprehension in smithing was superior to most 6-star pinnacle blacksmiths. If he could pass the 6-star blacksmith examination as well, he would be spared from spending even more Academic Credits here.

Based on what he had seen and heard so far, he could tell that Academic Credits were extremely difficult to earn. There would surely be many places where he would require them in the future, so it was best for him to save as much as possible for the time being.

"Challenging the 6-star blacksmith examination is a little beyond my current cultivation at the moment. If I want to clear the examination, I won't be able to skip the forging phase anymore..."

The reason Zhang Xuan had been able to clear all of the previous

examinations was because of the superior quality of the alloy he had created. As such, even though the weapons he had smithed so far were just mere lumps of steel, they were still able to reach the required grade.

However, in the 6-star examination, he would have to handle ores and metals which were beyond his current cultivation, and this meant that he wouldn't be able to process them as freely as he had all along. Due to that, it was unlikely that he would be able to clear the examination based on the quality of the alloy in itself.

In other words, if he wanted to clear the examination, he would have to forge the weapon... However, he had no experience with hammering whatsoever. If he were to start practicing now... would he still be able to make it in time?

Chapter 744 Attempting the 6-star Blacksmith Examination

"I won't be able to make it in time..."

Hammering, just like pill forging, was a hands-on skill which could only be mastered through countless years of practice. Even with the Library of Heaven's Path guiding him along, it would still be impossible for him to master the skill in time with only an hour left on the clock.

Just as Zhang Xuan was distressed as to what he should do next, a thought suddenly flashed across his mind, and his eyes lit up in excitement.

"Wait... Even though I can't forge a sword or those of that sort, I can turn the iron lump into a hammer! That should be much easier than other weapons..."

There were many intricacies behind swords and sabers which made them extremely difficult to forge them, but that shouldn't be the case for hammers!

With just a few hits on the metal lump, he should be able to create a hammer easily!

"Alright, it's decided then!" With a smile on his lips, Zhang Xuan shouted, "I request to challenge the 6-star blacksmith examination!"

Weng!

The sight before Zhang Xuan changed once more, turning into an even larger hall.

Many ores and metals that would have been difficult to find in real life appeared before him.

After some contemplation, Zhang Xuan picked out a few dozen of them and brought them to the furnace.

Xiong xiong!

Tossing the ores and metals into the furnace, Zhang Xuan began with his smithing.

...

Meanwhile, Yuan Hong and a group of master teachers were standing outside the Ocean of Weapons, waiting for the results of the examination.

After all that had happened, it was already nearing midnight. However, it didn't seem like anyone had the intention to leave.

That Zhang Xuan fellow had caused such a huge mess in the Blacksmith School, but not only did Vice School Head Yuan not punish him, he even escorted him to the Ocean of Weapons for him to take the blacksmith examination.

Everyone was curious to see what kind of legendary figure Zhang Xuan was for a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith to treat him with such respect.

"How far do you think he can advance in the Ocean of Weapons?"

"Do you even need to ask? With just four hours on the clock, he will only be able to clear the 1-star examination!"

"Even if he is a talented blacksmith who is capable of producing weapons at an unprecedented speed, he'll only be able to clear the 2-star examination at the maximum. Anything beyond that is physically impossible!"

"Indeed. Just take the forging process for example, in order to hammer the alloy into the perfect shape, one would have to spend at least an hour or two on it. Even seasoned blacksmiths wouldn't be able to go any faster than that!"

...

Everyone muttered with hushed voices.

Since that fellow declared that he would be challenging the 5-star

blacksmith examination, he should possess the ability to smith a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon at the minimum. However, due to the time limit within the Ocean of Weapons, it would be difficult for him to reach 2-star.

Anything further than that would be plain impossible!

As such, there was no one here who really thought that he would be able to clear the 5-star blacksmith examination today.

Nevertheless, for a person who had never challenged the blacksmith examination before, clearing two stars simultaneously was still an incredible feat.

Just as everyone was waiting patiently for the results from the Ocean of Weapons, footsteps suddenly sounded. Turning their heads over, everyone saw a few elders walking over.

"Look, the school head is here!"

"No, it isn't just the school head. The other vice school heads as well... Why are they all here?"

"They probably heard about the matter here and came over to take a look!"

The one who was leading the group was the head of the Blacksmith School, one of the Ten Great Master Teachers, Zhao Bingxu.

There were three elders walking behind him, and they were the remaining three vice school heads.

After conducting a Meridian and Bone Cleansing for Luo Qiqi and the others, they decided to head over here to see if the legendary student would be able to clear the 5-star blacksmith examination.

"School head!" As if having guessed that the school head would come, Yuan Hong didn't seem surprised in the least. He clasped his fist and greeted the other party.

"How is it? Has he begun the 5-star blacksmith examination yet?"

Judging from the current time, he should be done soon!" Zhao Bingxu asked with a smile.

"5-star blacksmith examination... This..." Yuan Hong muttered awkwardly.

Bewildered by Yuan Hong's reaction to his words, Zhao Bingxu asked doubtfully, "What's wrong? Isn't it Zhang shi who is undergoing the examination inside at the moment?"

"It's indeed him who is inside, but... it appears that Zhang shi has never taken a blacksmith examination before, so he is currently challenging the 1-star examination," Yuan Hong replied.

"He has never taken any blacksmith examination before?" Zhao Bingxu exclaimed.

The other three vice school heads behind him were also stunned by the revelation.

Since that fellow had never taken the 1-star examination before, why in the name of Kong shi was he attempting to challenge the 5-star examination?

"Yes." Yuan Hong nodded. "His intention before entering the Ocean of Weapons seemed to be to challenge the 2-star examination after clearing the 1-star examination. I wonder if he will be able to succeed."

Before entering the Ocean of Weapons, that fellow had asked if he could challenge the subsequent examinations as well, so he was probably preparing to do so. It would be difficult, but that fellow might just be able to pull it off.

"Are you curious? Actually, we can just take a peek at it!" Zhang Bingxu chuckled.

"Take a peek? But the Ocean of Weapons is still in operation, how do we take a look?" Yuan Hong was bewildered.

By right, as long as the Ocean of Weapons was still in operation,

it was impossible to know the results of the test inside. Otherwise, he wouldn't be waiting here.

"While it's indeed impossible to see the results within the Ocean of Weapons, we can always try to apply for the emblem for him! If the emblem appears, it will mean that he has cleared the 1-star examination!" Zhao Bingxu said as he stroked his beard.

"That... Indeed! Why didn't I think of that?" Yuan Hong slapped his thigh and chuckled.

The emblem would be dispatched outside after one cleared the examination in the Ocean of Weapons. As long as one had cleared the examination inside, the system would distribute an emblem when an application was sent in.

It was impossible to know the results of the blacksmith examination directly since Zhang Xuan wasn't out yet, but they could use this method to know how far he was into the examination!

If they were to succeed in applying for the 1-star emblem, it would mean that he had already cleared the 1-star examination and was in the midst of challenging the 2-star examination...

Such a simple matter, but to think that it had slipped his mind!

"Alright, I shall give it a try!"

Yuan Hong stepped forward, placed his hand on a button on the gigantic doors of the Ocean of Weapons, and pressed it lightly.

There was a momentary burst of light before an emblem fell from an aperture below the button.

"Oh? He cleared the 1-star examination?" Yuan Hong muttered as he grabbed the falling emblem.

It was Zhang Xuan's 1-star blacksmith emblem.

Since it was dispatched, it could only mean that Zhang Xuan had cleared the 1-star examination.

"Since he has cleared the 1-star examination, he should probably be in the midst of the 2-star examination at the moment..." Zhao Bingxu nodded.

"Hmm, it is about to be four hours soon. Let me give it a try to see if he has passed the 2-star examination yet..." Yuan Hong pondered for a moment before placing his palm back on the button.

Weng!

Another burst of light, and an emblem fell from the aperture once more.

"Th-this is the 2-star emblem? He has cleared the 2-star examination as well?" Yuan Hong froze for an instant before hurriedly reaching out to grab the falling emblem.

In his view, clearing an examination within four hours was already extremely difficult in itself. Even if there was some spare time after clearing the 1-star examination, the chances were that the examinee would already be exhausted by then, making it nearly impossible to clear the next one. Yet, this fellow actually cleared two examinations consecutively... Was this for real?

"He's cleared the 2-star examination?" Zhao Bingxu was taken aback as well.

He walked up to Yuan Hong, took the emblem from him, and examined it carefully. Inscribed on it was Zhang Xuan's name. There was no doubt about it... he had cleared the 2-star examination within the four-hour limit!

"But if he has cleared the 2-star examination, why isn't he out yet? Could it be that... he is trying for the 3-star examination?" Yuan Hong widened his eyes at that thought.

If Zhang Xuan wasn't out after clearing the 2-star examination, did that mean that he was attempting the subsequent 3-star examination?

To still have the strength to attempt subsequent examinations

after clearing the 2-star examination... What was that fellow made of?

"That should be the case. However, given the limited amount of time, it is impossible for him to clear the 3-star examination..." Yuan Hong shook his head.

As a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith, he knew how difficult smithing was.

Even with his current skills, he would only be able to smith Phantom low-tier weapons within four hours at best. Anything more than that was impossible!

To clear the 1-star and 2-star examination, Zhang Xuan would have to smith at least two weapons. However, no matter how proficient he was in smithing, he couldn't possibly be faster than a 6-star pinnacle blacksmith. As such, how could he possibly be able to smith the third weapon?

"Let's just try giving it a press..." Zhao Bingxu interjected as he walked up to the door and pressed on the button.

Weng!

Yet another flash of light and emblem.

"This... a 3-star emblem?"

Not only did Yuan Hong leap in shock, even Zhao Bingxu was stunned.

To smith three weapons within four hours, advancing from an apprentice to a 3-star blacksmith... This speed was insane!

"Could it be possible that..."

The duo glanced at one another, only to see the shock in each other's eyes. Unable to stand the curiosity any longer, Yuan Hong pressed the button once more.

Huala!

Again, another flash of light and another emblem.

Yuan Hong swallowed his saliva and uttered hoarsely, "4-star... He is actually trying to clear up to the 5-star blacksmith examination within four hours..."

When that fellow said that he would challenge the 5-star blacksmith examination, Yuan Hong had regarded it as nothing more than a joke. After all, how could anyone advance from an apprentice to a 5-star blacksmith within a single day? But who could have thought that he would actually succeed!

Since the 4-star emblem had appeared, it could only mean that he was currently attempting for the 5-star blacksmith examination.

To smith four weapons within four hours, and not to mention, all four of them had to reach the required quality in order to clear the examination... How in the world was that fellow doing it?

Xiong Bing, who had been watching the scene, couldn't help but ask, "Do you think that it's possible that... he might have cleared the 5-star examination?"

"That's impossible!" Hearing those words, Yuan Hong immediately shook his head in denial. "If he had cleared the 5-star examination, he would have been out by now. Why would he still be inside?"

But despite the words Yuan Hong was speaking, his hand still stretched out to press that button once again.

Huala!

And yet again, another emblem fell from the aperture.

Grabbing it hurriedly, Yuan Hong rubbed his eyes and stared at the name and rank inscribed on the emblem, and his body began shaking intensely.

"A 5-star emblem... H-h-h-h-he has even cleared the 5-star blacksmith examination as well? T-t-t-then... what examination is

he taking at the moment?"

Yuan Hong felt as if everything he had known about the world was crumbling before his eyes, and tears threatened to spill down his cheeks.

If they could apply for the 5-star emblem but that fellow wasn't out yet, didn't that mean that the fellow was attempting the 6-star blacksmith examination?

But how could that be possible?!

Even if he had sufficient time to attempt it... his cultivation was too low to clear the examination!

In order to become a 6-star blacksmith, one must be able to smith a Spirit pinnacle weapon at the minimum, and in order to do so, the minimum cultivation one must possess was Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Chrysalis realm!

This was a well-known fact amongst blacksmiths. Until one had achieved a Seamless Body at Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Chrysalis realm, the inadvertent leakage of zhenqi would result in imperfections in the smithing process, making it impossible to smith a Spirit pinnacle weapon.

For a weapon to reach Spirit pinnacle, it had to be rich in spirit and nearly impeccable. If one couldn't even control one's body perfectly, how could one possibly forge such a weapon?

Weng!

In the midst of his shock, Yuan Hong subconsciously reached out to press the button once more, and with a flash of light, another emblem fell from the aperture again.

"6-star..."

As if statues, everyone froze in place, and silence loomed before the Ocean of Weapons.

Chapter 745 Accepting You As My Teacher's Disciple

Usually in the four-hour timeframe in the Ocean of Weapons, one would only be able to raise one's rank up by a single star. Yet, in a single seating, six emblems had been distributed by the Ocean of Weapons!

This meant that... in a single breath, he cleared the examination from 1-star all the way to 6-star, and it was all a success!

For a freshman with a Cosmos Bridge realm cultivation to actually clear the 6-star blacksmith examination...

Everyone couldn't help but tremble out of sheer agitation and shock.

This was especially so for the female receptionist, Li Xuan. Her eyes rolled up, and she nearly fainted on the spot.

Through her conversation with him, she could tell that he possessed minimal knowledge of the Blacksmith School at best. And yet, such a person actually cleared the 6-star blacksmith examination...

She actually got impatient with a person who possessed the capability of a 6-star blacksmith! As such a thought flashed through her mind, she began shaking in fear. If there was a hole in the ground at this moment, she would dive in without any hesitation.

On the other hand, Zhao Bingxu, Yuan Hong, and the other vice school heads also nearly blacked out.

To forge six weapons within four hours to progress from a mere apprentice to a 6-star blacksmith... Was he still a human?

"School head, do you think that... you would be able to do it as well?" Yuan Hong couldn't help but ask with his quivering lips.

School Head Zhao boasted the greatest capability in smithing among them, and it was by a wide margin at that.

If there was any one of them who could match that achievement, it would only be School Head Zhao.

"I..." After a moment of hesitation, Zhao Bingxu eventually shook his head, "I couldn't do it either!"

Despite his superior smithing speed, it was impossible for him to complete six weapons within six hours.

In truth, the smithing of lower grade weapons didn't necessarily take less time than higher quality weapons.

It was true that lower quality materials were easier to process, making the synthesis phase much easier. However, the forging phase was still likely to be extremely time-consuming. While the material would be easier to shape, special care had to be taken in order to ensure that the weapon didn't snap or deform. As such, the forging of the weapon still had to be done step by step.

In such a case, his incredible strength as a Saint didn't provide him much of an advantage.

If he were to start from 1-star, 3-star would probably be his limit. Yet, that fellow actually reached 6-star in a single breath...

Was this feat still humanly possible?

Swallowing a mouthful of saliva, Yuan Hong asked hesitantly, "Then... the matter regarding accepting him as your disciple..."

"That..." A crimson tinge swiftly enveloped Zhao Bingxu's face as he found himself at a loss for words.

He was still thinking a moment ago that he would accept the other party as his student and impart the essence of his comprehension of smithing to him, thus creating a beautiful legend for the Blacksmith School.

But... if that fellow was able to accomplish what he wasn't able

to, he would only be humiliating himself if he were to ask the other party to be his student!

Ji ya!

While the both of them were stuck in a dilemma and the others were frozen in shock, the Ocean of Weapons' doors abruptly opened, and the silhouette of a young man came into sight.

At this moment, fatigue was written all over Zhang Xuan's face, and his movements were sluggish.

Even though he had recovered some of his strength inside through absorbing the spiritual energy in the high-tier spirit stone, he had still overexerted himself in the 6-star blacksmith examination.

Ultimately, his current cultivation was only at Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle. Even with the enhancement from Heaven's Path zhenqi and Heaven's Path Golden Body, he was still pushed to his very limits. Thus, after clearing the examination, he had to rest for a moment before he could muster the strength to stand up and leave.

Nevertheless, it was fortunate that he had cleared the examination!

At the current moment, he was already a quasi 6-star blacksmith!

(In the Upper Nine Paths occupations, unless special exceptions are given from the headquarters, as long as one's cultivation has yet to reach the required level, it could only be considered as a quasi-rank.)

"Zhang shi..." Yuan Hong walked over with admiration evident on his face.

If he was still a little conflicted a moment ago due to the destruction of the various amenities, at this moment, he finally realized how wise the school head's decision was.

To be able to pass the 6-star blacksmith examination with just a cultivation of Cosmos Bridge realm, such talent had never been seen in the Blacksmith School's thousands of years of history!

Given sufficient time, he would surely become yet another Wu Yangzi of Hongyuan Empire!

With such a figure in the Blacksmith School, the reputation of the school would soar, and more talents would opt to join their ranks as well.

"Here is your emblem!" Yuan Hong stepped forward and passed Zhang Xuan his quasi 6-star emblem.

"Thank you!" Taking the emblem, Zhang Xuan nodded.

At this moment, another elder with a bright smile on his face stepped forward.

"Zhang shi, I am Zhao Bingxu!"

"Zhao Bingxu?" Zhang Xuan glanced at Yuan Hong doubtfully.

This name sounded extremely foreign to him. He didn't know anyone who went by such a name.

Looking at the puzzled expression on Zhang Xuan's face, the master teachers in the area staggered.

'You came to the Blacksmith School to challenge its examinations, but you don't know who the school head is? That's really enough of you!'

Li Xuan could also feel tears pouring down her face.

She'd thought that Zhang Xuan was only ignorant of the rules of the academy, but it turned out that... he was ignorant of everything!

Yet, it was such an ignorant person who cleared the 6-star blacksmith examination, bringing the school head and vice school heads here just to meet him personally. On the other hand, she could only serve as a humble receptionist in the Blacksmith

School...

Truly, how could the difference between two humans be so great?

Knowing that the young man before him truly didn't know of the Zhao Bingxu's identity, Yuan Hong hurriedly explained, "Zhao shi is the head of the Blacksmith School, one of the Ten Great Master Teachers..."

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and greeted him.

"Zhang Xuan pays respect to School Head Zhao!"

While he had successfully cleared the 6-star blacksmith examination, there was still a huge gap between him and the head of the Blacksmith School and a member of the Ten Great Master Teachers.

"It's okay, there's no need to stand on ceremony, Zhang shi. It is heartening to see a man as young as you clear the 6-star blacksmith examination!" Seeing the young man retaining his humility despite his astounding achievement, Zhao Bingxu nodded in commendation.

"Thank you for your polite words, I was just lucky..." Zhang Xuan quickly replied.

With his current cultivation, it was extremely difficult for him to smith a Spirit pinnacle weapon. If not for a fair bit of luck here and there, he would still be a 5-star blacksmith at this moment.

"Luck favors the diligent and capable. It is rare to see a person who can still remain level-headed in the face of success. I can see why Luo Qiqi and the others are in awe of you," Zhao Bingxu said as he stroked his beard. He was getting more and more fond of the young man before him.

Too many times he had seen young geniuses with their heads in the skies due to just a few accomplishments here and there. On the

other hand, the young man didn't allow his success to go to his head. It seemed like his smithing ability wasn't just the only aspect of him that was admirable; his mental fortitude was incredible as well.

If he could accept such a genius as his disciple, his reputation would surely soar!

However... considering that the other party's skills were not beneath his, it would be unlikely for the other party to accept it.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhao Bingxu smiled and said, "Zhang shi, your talent in smithing is unmatched by any in the younger generation! However, if you wish to reach greater heights, you must have someone to guide and correct you... With my shallow grasp of smithing, I dare not ask you to become my student. However, if you wish, in the stead of my teacher, I hope to accept you as his student!"

"Accept me as your teacher's student?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"That's right. My teacher is a 7-star master teacher in Qingyuan Conferred Empire, and he possesses great prestige there. I'm sure he would be more than glad to have a talented blacksmith like you as his student!" Zhao Bingxu replied.

"School Head Zhao will accept that fellow as his teacher's student in place of his teacher?"

"If that were to happen, does that mean that Zhang shi would be School Head Zhao's junior?"

"This..."

"To become the junior of one of the Ten Great Master Teachers, the student of a 7-star blacksmith... Regardless of which title it is, there will be no one who will dare to stand in his way in the academy!"

"This is amazing..."

...

Hearing the conversation between the duo, an uproar broke out amidst the master teachers in the area.

Even Yuan Hong had nearly fell to the ground from shock.

He already found it shocking to hear of School Head Zhao's intentions to take Zhang shi in as his student, but for him to become his junior instead... This was madness!

If Zhang shi were to accept that offer, wouldn't that mean that he would be a peer to them?

For a Grade 1 student who hadn't even received his student token yet to become the school head's junior...

Yuan Hong, Xiong Bing, and the others glanced at one another with bulging eyes.

But as insane as this matter sounded, Zhang shi had already shown that he was qualified for that.

To advance from an apprentice to 6-star in a single breath... This had never ever been done before, and this record would likely remain unbroken for ages to come!

Perhaps the unfathomable Sage Clans in the Conferred Empires might be capable of such a feat, but one thing was for sure, this feat was beyond everyone in the Master Teacher Academy.

"This..." Not expecting that there would be another person who would attempt to take him in as his student once more in the same day, this time in the stead of his teacher, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply for a moment before shaking his head. "I am truly apologetic, but I already have a teacher named Yang Xuan. For the time being, I don't intend to acknowledge any teachers."

If Zhang Xuan were to accept the other party's offer, he might find several restrictions imposed on him. At the same time, he could easily accumulate any required knowledge by reading

through books. There was no need for him to learn from another.

"He rejected the offer?"

"That was an opportunity to become School Head Zhao's junior!"

"The world has gone mad, truly mad! An opportunity to become the student of the school head is something that countless have dreamed of, and yet he rejected an offer to become his junior... Slap me, I want to see if I am dreaming!"

"Rejecting an offer to become a student of a 7-star master teacher, what else does he want?"

...

Everyone became petrified upon hearing that rejection.

Countless here had laughed heartily when granted the opportunity of becoming School Head Zhao's student, only to wake up and realize in dejection that it was just a dream.

Yet, that fellow wasn't even willing to become School Head Zhao's junior...

'Why don't you just ascend to the heavens?!'

At this moment, Luo Yan's body was trembling in agitation, and he nearly fell to the ground weakly.

He had sneaked out from his quarters, and it was only after seeing this scene that he realized why his teacher's attitude would change so abruptly.

A junior of one of the Ten Great Master Teachers... Just this title itself was deserving of Yuan Hong's respect.

But what that left him tugging his hair in frenzy was that... that fellow rejected that offer!

Screw that!

'Big brother, let's negotiate about this matter. Why don't we switch places... or rather, it's fine if I can become your disciple

too!'

"You... aren't willing?" Zhao Bingxu was stupefied as well.

He had already gone this far, accepting that fellow as his teacher's disciple out of fear that he wouldn't be willing to become his student, but who could have known that he would be disagreeable to that as well!

'Don't you know that a formidable teacher means strong backing as well? Do you understand the kind of privileges and authority you will gain the academy due to that?'

"School Head Zhao, thank you for your high appraisal of me!" Zhang Xuan bowed. He had an indifferent expression on his face, but the truth was that his heart was bleeding at this moment.

He had already crafted Yang shi as an unparalleled expert of the world. After all that had been said and done, he had little choice but to go on with his lie.

If he were to take another as his teacher so easily, what would that say about Yang shi?

How could he convince others that Yang shi was at least an 8-star master teacher when his direct disciple would take even a 7-star master teacher as his teacher?

Argh, he would have no choice but to swallow the bitter fruit he had sowed!

"I guess I was being a little too hasty..." Seeing the other party's determined attitude, Zhao Bingxu sighed deeply. "Pardon me for my ignorance, but may I know who Yang shi is?"

Since Zhang shi could even reject the opportunity to become a student of a 7-star master teacher, it could only mean to say that Yang shi was a formidable master teacher himself... But if that was the case, why hadn't he heard of the other party before?

"My teacher seeks a carefree life wandering the lands, not

wanting to be tied down by fame. As such, there are very few who know of his name!" Zhang Xuan chuckled.

After a moment of pondering, Zhao Bingxu clasped his fist.

"I am interested in paying respect to the master teacher who is capable of grooming such an outstanding student. May I trouble Zhang shi to extend my regards to him?"

"You wish to meet my teacher?" Zhang Xuan froze.

"Indeed. You are an incredible genius, and I think that it's a pity if we simply leave your talent for smithing be. It's normal for a master teacher to have several teachers in his lifetime, and even Kong shi himself acknowledged quite a few people as his teacher—Tan shi, Li shi... Thus, I wish to meet Yang shi and discuss this matter with him. If we just impart the art of smithing to you, there shouldn't be a conflict of interest!" Zhao Bingxu said.

Chapter 746 Zhang Xuan's Flaw

"Ah..." Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

It seemed like the other party was truly determined to have him become his junior.

However, despite the various benefits that could come from the opportunity, he still thought that it was better for him to turn down the deal. The privileges would come with a set of responsibilities, and he wasn't willing to bear them.

"Since Yang shi is also one of our own, surely it should be fine for us to just meet?" Zhao Bingxu stroked his beard.

He was indeed interested in meeting the teacher behind such an outstanding student.

"This... The truth is that my teacher has no fixed lodging, so I don't know where he is at the moment either. However, I'll make sure to relay your intentions to him the next time I meet him," said Zhang Xuan with a conflicted expression.

'What the heck is this?

'All I wanted to do was to read my books patiently, take all of the required examinations, and leave dashing. Who could have known that... everyone I met would be so intent on taking me as their student or their junior...

'Do I look like an easy man?!

'Seems like it's about time to have Yang shi make an appearance. Otherwise, if the Ten Great Master Teachers visit me one after another, how can I read my books in peace?

'I want to keep a low profile, you know!'

"Alright, that's a promise then!" Zhao Bingxu chuckled.

"School Head Zhao and the other vice school heads, I have overexerted myself in the 6-star blacksmith examination, so I

would like to return to my residence to rest. I'll be taking my leave now!" Fearing that Zhao Bingxu would continue asking him about Yang Shi's affairs and put him on the spot, Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

"Right, you must be drained by now. You should quickly return and have a good rest!"

"It must be exhausting to forge six weapons in four hours. Let's talk tomorrow then!"

...

It was only after hearing those words that it struck Zhao Bingxu, Yuan Hong, and the others that the young man before them had just finished forging six weapons. In a moment of agitation, it had slipped their minds.

It was indeed rude of them to keep the other party with them when he was already on the verge of collapsing.

"Thank you!"

Hearing their agreement, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. However, just as he was about to leave, Zhao Bingxu's voice sounded once more. "Since you have just joined the academy, you must be staying at the shared dormitory at the moment. Here is my personal token. Get yourself a residence in the Elite Sector with this. This will make it more convenient for us to meet and talk."

As he said those words, School Head Zhao took out a token similar to the one Elder Mo had given him previously and proffered it to Zhang Xuan.

Back at the School Head's Office, Yuan Hong had only spoken about how Zhang Xuan had destroyed the Passageway of Records. He didn't mention that the latter had Elder Mo's token in hand.

Besides, Zhao Bingxu clearly intended this as a gesture of goodwill to get on the good side of this rising talent. Were it not for Yuan Hong's own personal token commanding less authority than

the 'Ten Great Master Teachers', he would have wanted to give his own to Zhang shi as well.

"This..." Zhang Xuan blinked in surprise.

"Take it. My token should bring you some convenience in the academy." Zhao Bingxu nodded, indicating that it was fine for him to accept the gift.

"Thank you, School Head Zhao!" At the other party's insistence, Zhang Xuan accepted the token.

He had already rejected the other party's offer once, so it would be disrespectful of him to turn down this gift as well.

However, as the crowd saw the look of reluctance on Zhang Xuan's face as he accepted Zhao Bingxu's token, their mouths twitched violently, and they nearly burst into tears.

One must know that it was be difficult for an average student to even meet School Head Zhao.

School Head Zhao had come personally to meet that fellow, and not only did he reject the offer to become his junior, he was even unwilling to accept the token... Where did this freak come from?

Did he know how many of them wanted to pummel him to death right then because of that reluctance on his face?

"I'll be taking my leave then!"

Taking the token, Zhang Xuan immediately turned around and left. Before long, he had already disappeared over the horizon.

"It sure is a huge pity..." Watching as Zhang Xuan's silhouette disappear, Zhao Bingxu shook his head.

"A pity?" Yuan Hong asked, uncomprehending of Zhao Bingxu's words.

"Zhang shi is an incredible genius. Despite his politeness, I can still see the pride in his eyes. It will be hard to win him over with material gains. It will be nigh impossible to retain him in the

Blacksmith School!" Zhao Bingxu sighed.

"You're right." After a moment of contemplation, Yuan Hong nodded as well.

That was an opportunity to become School Head Zhao's junior, but he still rejected it without much hesitation... As such, what else could the Blacksmith School offer him?

Surely there wasn't anything as attractive as that?

"Let's just take a step at a time and see what we can do. In any case, make sure to treat him with respect and don't offend him," Zhao Bingxu said.

After which, he turned his eyes to the Ocean of Weapons and said, "Yuan Hong and Xiong Bing, follow me in. I am really interested to see how he managed to forge six weapons in four hours!"

Even Zhao Bingxu himself had to concede that it was impossible for him to forge six weapons and advance from an apprentice to a 6-star master teacher within four hours. How did a Cosmos Bridge realm blacksmith accomplish a feat that was even beyond him?

"Yes!" Yuan Hong and Xiong Bing nodded.

In truth, they harbored the same doubts as well.

Thus, the group pushed open the towering doors of the Ocean of Weapons and walked in.

As the head of the Blacksmith School, Zhao Bingxu wielded special privileges that allowed him to enter the Ocean of Weapons even without using Academic Credits.

"Let's look at the recordings of the examination!" Zhao Bingxu said as he flicked his finger.

Weng!

The Ocean of Weapons whirled into action, and Zhang Xuan's figure from a moment ago, when he was still taking the

examination, appeared before the group's eyes.

There was a special installation in the Ocean of Weapons that allowed it to record the happenings in the examinations and replay it, so that others could study and learn from outstanding examinees.

Hu!

Under the gazes of the group, Zhang Xuan casually grabbed a couple of ores and metals and threw it into the furnace. After which, he retrieved them and synthesized them together before tossing it into the quenching fluid straight.

"This..."

"He went straight into quenching without forging the weapon?" Everyone froze in shock.

"However, forging is indeed the most time-consuming phase in the smithing of a weapon. He could indeed save himself a lot of time through skipping it. This is a brilliant idea! Why didn't I think of it?" Zhao Bingxu's eyes glowed in excitement as he slapped his thigh.

Of the three phases of smithing, the most arduous and complicated procedure was, without doubt, hammering the ingot into its intended shape. If one could skip this step, one could indeed save a fair bit of time.

However... could the product of this smithing still be considered a weapon?

Soon, they saw Zhang Xuan retrieving a metal lump from the quenching fluid before placing it on the grading pedestal. After which... he cleared the examination.

"To think that a mere alloy which hasn't undergone hammering yet could reach Phantom low-tier. Incredible!" Xiong Bing nodded in commendation.

It was not without reason that weapons were called "creations under a thousand hammerings". The purpose of the forging phase wasn't just to shape the weapon but to strike out the impurities in the weapon and balance out the alloy as well, thus enhancing its quality. Yet, without a single hammering, that fellow was able to make a mere metal lump achieve the quality worthy of being deemed as a weapon.

Even as 6-star pinnacle blacksmiths, none of them were capable of doing the same!

"To craft such a perfect alloy would require a thorough understanding of every single property of the ores and metal, so as to determine the temperature of the furnace, the timing of the synthesis, and deduce the reaction from the synthesis..."

"On top of that, he has to work on the metals and ores simultaneously in the synthesis process while controlling the heat in the furnace through his zhenqi... To be able to multitask that well, it could only mean that he has a powerful soul as well!"

"Furthermore, to be able to remain unfazed at such proximity to the furnace, and even grab the searing alloy barehanded... How powerful must his physical body be?"

"His movements are fluid, devoid of the slightest hesitation. This goes to say that he possesses mental fortitude, allowing him to move confidently without allowing doubt to hinder him!"

...

The longer they watched, the more astonished the group became.

Synthesizing the metals and ores into an alloy and quenching it straight after, they could easily do the same as well. However, it was a different question whether they would be able to clear the examination with what they created.

In fact, even the legendary grandmaster blacksmith, Wu Yangzi, didn't seem to be capable of this feat!

Was that fellow really an inheritor of Wu Yangzi's heritage and not his teacher?

Soon, they reached the 6-star blacksmith examination simulation.

With each flick of a finger, a melodious metallic ring sounded. Before long, a massive metal hammer appeared before Zhang Xuan.

"This..."

"Is this really a weapon forged by a blacksmith?"

Judging by how skillful that young man was in his hammering, they'd thought that the end product would astound them, just as he had done many times before. Who would have thought that... his work would turn out to be so hideous!

Are you sure that it is a metal hammer and not a steel tower?

Everyone glanced at one another speechlessly.

After watching the entire examination, Zhao Bingxu couldn't help but remark, "It seems like... Zhang shi does possess great talent, but... his forging skills are still a little lacking!"

"Lacking is an understatement... It is as if he has never learnt hammering before!" Yuan Hong shook his head.

Honestly speaking, not even an apprentice blacksmith would create a hammer as terrible as his.

Flame control, synthesis, quenching... All of these, Zhang shi had perfect grasp over. Yet, why would he simply fail so utterly in the hammering phase?

One must know that this was actually the simplest phase of the entire smithing process. It could easily be mastered through repetition...

"But this works to our advantage as well. We can use this opportunity to teach him and rally him to our Blacksmith School!"

Zhao Bingxu smiled.

He was still thinking about how he could win Zhang Xuan over and tie him down to the Blacksmith School when this opportunity appeared before him. With this, he could step forward and guide the other party along, thus making him indebted to the Blacksmith School!

"Yes, that's a good idea!" The other vice school heads also nodded in agreement as well.

Their only fear was that Zhang Xuan would have no flaws at all. As long as he had a flaw, they could use it as an impetus to approach him and build a close relationship with him.

Once he started learning from one of them, it would just be a matter of time before he was tied down to their ship!

...

On the other hand, after returning to his residence in the Elite Sector, fatigue finally set into Zhang Xuan's body, leaving him feeling weak throughout.

While he did cut some corners in his work, it still hadn't been an easy feat for him to smith six weapons within four hours.

His zhenqi was depleted, and his spirit and soul were worn out.

If not for his soul having broken the ten meters bottleneck, he might have just collapsed in the midst of the examination.

"I didn't have a chance to examine it before, but it seems my soul has undergone a qualitative change after breaking the ten meters bottleneck."

After absorbing some spiritual energy from his high-tier spirit stone to recharge, Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled a matter.

Back in the Chamber of Earth Flame, when his soul had successfully overcome the ten meters bottleneck, he vividly felt some changes in his soul. However, with the chamber collapsing

on him right afterward and the various troubles afterward, he hadn't had the opportunity to check on it yet.

Since he had some time now, it would be good for him to see what was going on.

His soul, physical body, and zhenqi: these were the three factors that stood at the foundation of his strength. Through past experience, he'd learned that it was essential for him to maintain a perfect grasp of his condition so as to avoid any unfortunate mishaps.

Activating the formation around him to block out any prying eyes, Zhang Xuan sat on the ground and closed his eyes.

Hu!

His soul left his body.

At this moment, his soul was as enormous as a giant. Even with his feet on the ground, his head could still easily reach the roof of the residence.

"Introspection!"

Zhang Xuan activated the Eye of Insight to view the situation in his soul.

"What is this? H-how is this possible..."

Upon first glance, Zhang Xuan suddenly froze, and shocked exclamations escaped from his mouth.

Chapter 747 Return of the Innate Fetal Poison

Under the discerning gaze of the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan could see a thin gray line floating amidst his massive soul. It resembled a parasite, leaving him with an ominous feeling within.

"This is... the Innate Fetal Poison?" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

Even back when he was still in Tianxuan Kingdom, he had already noticed the Innate Fetal Poison in him. However, as he began to cultivate the Heaven's Path Divine Art, the poison was suppressed by the Heaven's Path zhenqi, thus crippling it for the time being. As time passed, he began to pay less and less heed to it.

Based on his previous investigation, he should be able to resolve the problem by becoming a 9-star master teacher before the age of thirty. Who could have known that... the Innate Fetal Poison would actually slip into his soul?

He could suppress the Innate Fetal Poison in his physical body through his Heaven's Path zhenqi, but how was he supposed to deal with it in his soul?

Zhang Xuan's face turned livid.

A soul was the foundation of a human's consciousness. Its destruction would spell irreversible death for one.

Zhang Xuan was still previously harboring the thought of focusing on the cultivation of his soul such that even if he was unable to resolve his Innate Fetal Poison, he could at least still live on as a soul.

But from the looks of it, this idea was impossible now.

Unknowingly, the treacherous poison had managed to seep into his soul.

As his soul was too weak before, he wasn't able to perceive it. However, as his soul broke the ten meters bottleneck and grew even stronger and more sensitive, he finally noticed that something was amiss.

"Or perhaps... has the Innate Fetal Poison been in my soul from the very start?"

The Innate Fetal Poison was planted in him back when he was nothing more than a fetus in his mother's womb. Given how vulnerable he was then, it shouldn't have been too difficult for it to spread from his body to his soul, or vice-versa.

However, considering how it had been some time since he'd become a soul oracle, it didn't seem quite possible for him to have never noticed the Innate Fetal Poison in his soul all along. It was as if that congregation of Innate Fetal Poison had been invisible to him all along!

Or could it be that it was simply too weak for him to perceive then? If that was the case, could it mean that the Innate Fetal Poison was leeching off his soul, growing along with it?

'What should I do? Will the Innate Fetal Poison work up earlier if I continue cultivating my soul?' Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

Without the Heaven's Path zhenqi, it would be difficult for him to suppress the Innate Fetal Poison. If the poison in his soul were to trigger, he would be helpless before it.

What the heck was this!

The other protagonists that transcend to another world were either top-notch geniuses or given overpowered artifacts that allowed them to dominate the world. It was one thing for him to have been born with average talent, but he was even given such a 'gift' from the world. What crime did he commit in his previous life to deserve this?

While the Soul of Heaven's Path was indeed powerful, it shared

one common trait with the other souls—it was incapable of harnessing zhenqi, and this included the Heaven's Path zhenqi as well. Without the Heaven's Path zhenqi to suppress the Innate Fetal Poison, it would be able to do as it pleased in his soul.

In other words, his life and death hinged on the whim of that monstrosity!

"Unless... I can find something to suppress it!"

If his Heaven's Path zhenqi couldn't help him suppress the Innate Fetal Poison in his soul, he would just have to find something else that could!

Otherwise, if that monstrosity were to get into a bad mood and wreak havoc, he might just die a premature death.

It wouldn't do to simply bank his fate on luck.

"Soul oracle is the occupation that specializes in the topic of souls. I have received Mo Hunsheng's heritage, but there isn't any method for me to suppress the Innate Fetal Poison in there. Furthermore, the heritage of soul oracles has been wiped out by the Master Teacher Pavilion, so it's unlikely that I'll be able to find a solution from there..." Zhang Xuan contemplated.

If he wanted to find something to suppress the Innate Fetal Poison in his soul, he would have to first find something compatible with his soul. To do so, he would first have to deepen his understanding regarding souls.

However, with the heritage of the number one occupation specializing in the study of souls extinct, he could only try to find another substitute for it.

"Of the ten schools in the Master Teacher Academy, the supporting occupations that can influence one's soul are painter, demonic tunist, and terpsichore. Painting can calm hearts and build conception, but it possesses no offensive capability whatsoever. On the other hand, demonic tunist and terpsichore

can beguile hearts and destroy souls. Thus, I should focus on the latter two instead."

The other supporting occupations such as beast tamer, blacksmith, celestial designer, and physicians had little regarding the study of souls.

At this point, the only two occupations which could possibly help Zhang Xuan were demonic tunist and terpsichore.

Those two occupations specialized in the beguilement of souls, so they should have a sizeable collection regarding the study of souls.

"Un, I will pay those two schools a visit when dawn comes!"

Time waited for no one. Every day he waited meant an additional day where he could be killed by the Innate Fetal Poison.

However, it was already nearing midnight, so it was unlikely that their facilities would still be open. Thus, it would better for him to head there after daybreak.

Even though there was an event in the academy tomorrow, in which the teachers of the academy would accept students under their tutelage, it didn't make a difference to him whether he went there or not.

After all, if he intended to seek a teacher, he would have already accepted Zhao Bingxu's offer to become his junior. It would be pointless for him to reject that offer and seek a normal teacher instead.

Even if a student was left without a teacher at the end of the event, it wasn't the end of the world for him. For one, he could still attend public lessons.

Besides, Zhang Xuan's main goal for coming to the Master Teacher Academy was to access the collection of books in here. In view of that, it didn't matter whether he had the guidance of a teacher or not.

"I don't think I can sleep tonight. I guess I shall take a look at how Wang Ying and the others are doing!"

With the issue regarding the Innate Fetal Poison weighing down his mind, it was unlikely that he would be able to rest. Since that was the case, he might as well take a look at how his students and butler were doing and provide them some guidance on their cultivation.

Otherwise, they might find themselves lagging too far behind Yuan Tao, Zhao Ya, and Lu Chong.

Thus, Zhang Xuan stood up and walked out of his room.

Turbid clouds shrouded the night sky, and not a single star or the moon was to be seen.

Even on such a dark night, it would be too conspicuous for him to travel using the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, especially since there were sentries keeping a lookout for the aerial space in the academy given the presence of Saint realm experts in the city. After a moment of hesitation, he decided to summon the Great Violetwing Beast.

There were quite a few students in the academy who bore the beast tamer occupation, so aerial spirit beasts were allowed to travel to and fro unrestricted grounds in the academy.

Leaping onto the back of the aerial spirit beast, Zhang Xuan flew out of the academy.

Before heading to Leiyuan Peak, Sun Qiang had already found a residence, and he had informed Zhang Xuan of the address as well. After a couple minutes of flight, a small residence soon came into sight.

This residence was only a few hundred meters square large, significantly smaller than the previous one they'd stayed in.

Nevertheless, in Hongyuan City where every inch of ground was worth a fortune, it must have taken a huge deal of effort to find a

residence of this size.

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to leap down from the Great Violetwing Beast's back, he suddenly frowned.

"Eye of Insight!"

With a sharp gaze, he surveyed his surroundings.

Soon, he saw a few shadows hidden inconspicuously in the shadows around the residence, seemingly up to no good.

"They are all Ethereal Treading realm experts!"

While they had done a good job concealing their trail, they were still unable to fool the Eye of Insight.

Zhang Xuan could feel immense power lying dormant in their bodies, as if a crouching mighty dragon. Astonishingly, they were all Transcendent Mortal 8-dan experts!

Why would such experts be lurking around his residence?

Could it be that they meant Sun Qiang and the others harm?

"We have just arrived here, and Sun Qiang and the others have nothing much of fortune on them either. How did they catch the eye of such experts?"

While Ethereal Treading realm cultivators weren't the top tier power in Hongyuan City, they were definitely considered experts here.

For so many experts to surround a small residence, what could they be up to?

Surely Sun Qiang and the others didn't have any possession on them that could attract their attention?

"Forget it, this is a good opportunity to try out my new strength!" A glint flashed across Zhang Xuan's eyes.

At Leiyuan Peak, he had managed to advance his cultivation to Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle, resulting in his zhenqi strength

rising to 8,000,000 ding. In the Chamber of Earth Flame, he had managed to achieve Second Incandescence in the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, thus enhancing his overall physical strength to 8,000,000 ding as well. Factoring in the 3,200,000 ding of strength from his soul cultivation, the overall might he could harness added up to almost 20,000,000 ding.

This granted him the strength to fight with Ethereal Treading realm advanced stage experts on equal grounds!

Since those fellows seemed to be up to no good, there shouldn't be any trouble using them as punching bags.

Hu!

With a leap, Zhang Xuan descended from the back of the Great Violetwing Beast.

Since the Great Violetwing Beast was maintaining a high altitude in the sky, the several men hidden in the shadows didn't seem to notice Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan drove his zhenqi and activated the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Step. As if a light feather, he slowly drifted down amidst the cloak of the night sky.

"I should start from the weakest!"

There was a total of four men hidden in the area, and the weakest of them was at Ethereal Treading realm primary stage. Silently, as if an apparition, Zhang Xuan's figure floated stealthily toward the masked man hidden behind an ancient tree.

By cloaking his vitals with his Heaven's Path zhenqi, he was able to erase his presence such that not even a Chrysalis realm expert would be able to notice him.

He silently gathered his strength on his palm and pressed it against the masked man.

The masked man behind the ancient tree felt an abrupt jolt on his

back before immense might began gushing through his body, sealing every single one of his meridians.

Putong!

The next moment, he was already lying on the ground, unconscious.

"Oh? This isn't as difficult as I thought it would be!" Zhang Xuan muttered.

It was just a day ago that he was still completely powerless before an Ethereal Treading realm expert, but at this moment, he could already incapacitate them without much effort.

After knocking the first one out, he turned his gaze toward his second target and slowly made his way over.

The target this time around was an Ethereal Treading realm intermediate stage expert. He was slightly warier, and Zhang Xuan was discovered before he could make his way to him. Just as he was able to exclaim to warn his other comrades, he suddenly felt an extremely heavy pressure pushing on his soul, rendering him incapable of speech.

It was an assault on his soul!

While he was an Ethereal Treading realm expert, he was far weaker than Zhang Xuan when it came to the prowess of their souls. As a result, he was paralyzed for half a second.

It was a short moment, but a moment was all it took to overwhelm an opponent in a battle.

Hu!

Executing the same palm strike, the second target was also knocked unconscious. Even at the point when his consciousness faded, he wasn't able to see the face of his assailant.

"It was easier for these two because they are weaker, but it probably won't so smoothly for the remaining two..."

After knocking out two of the four targets, Zhang Xuan exhaled a mouthful of turbid air.

In terms of absolute strength, the two he had knocked out were weaker than him. However, the remaining two were at Ethereal Treading realm advanced stage and pinnacle respectively, and this meant that both their cultivation and absolute strength were higher than his.

As such, it wouldn't be easy for him to assault them and knock them out as easily as the other two.

"It'll be troublesome if they band together upon noticing my presence. I should clear one of them as fast as I can first!"

While it would be difficult to strike out the remaining targets with a single strike, he should be able to overwhelm his opponent swiftly using the element of surprise as long as he attacked decisively. Thus, he pushed his foot powerfully against the ground.

Hu!

With movements as swift as lightning, he rushed straight for the Ethereal treading realm advanced stage masked man.

Heaven's Path Movement Art!

Zhang Xuan's movements were so fast that one could only barely see a shadow flitting across the darkness.

"What?"

The huge gale raked up by the Heaven's Path Movement Art alarmed the remaining two targets. The Ethereal Treading realm advanced stage masked man whom Zhang Xuan was aiming for narrowed his eyes, and cold sweat suddenly began trickling down his back.

However, it was already too late for him to do anything. Just as he was about to flee, a fist was already heading straight for his solar plexus.

Peng!

This punch harnessed the great momentum of the Heaven's Path Movement Art and the immense strength of the Heaven's Path Fist Art, creating an overwhelming might that couldn't be opposed.

Pu!

Before the masked man could react, he was already struck squarely by the fist. Fresh blood spewed from his mouth as he flew a dozen meters away, striking head first into a massive boulder before passing out.

Chapter 748 Spirit Emporium

"You are seeking death!" the final masked man howled.

He didn't expect to be assaulted here, and his face turned livid. Clenching his jaw, he drove his zhenqi, and the powerful aura of an Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle expert gushed from his body.

Hu!

The masked man raised his hands, and his zhenqi suddenly flooded the area. In an instant, the air around Zhang Xuan grew viscous. There was an immense resistance against every single movement he made, resulting in a huge dip in his movement speed.

His strength didn't pale too far in comparison to the other party, but due to the difference in their cultivation, and thus the comprehension of nature, his ability in utilizing zhenqi was far beneath the other party's. In a battle, this would pose as a significant disadvantage.

In other words, while he could stand toe-to-toe with an Ethereal Treading realm expert in a direct clash of strength, he was still severely handicapped in a proper battle.

"Break!"

But even so, Zhang Xuan wouldn't allow himself to be defeated without any resistance. Gathering his strength, he abruptly kicked forward.

Huala!

Under the immense force nearing 20,000,000 ding, the zhenqi spatial lockdown shattered like a broken mirror.

Hu!

Activating the Heaven's Path Movement Art once more, Zhang Xuan charged right up to the masked man.

Hua la!

A fist as tough as adamantium shot forth for the masked man.

"Humph!" After the first clash, the masked man could already see that his opponent's cultivation was only at Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle. While the other party might have raised his strength significantly through some unknown means, it was still a far way from reaching up to him, an Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle expert!

There was no way he could lose to a Cosmos Bridge realm opponent!

Gathering his zhenqi in his arms, he struck back with a palm strike.

Hua la!

His hand carried great might that seemed to be more than capable of collapsing mountains.

Spirit high-tier battle technique, Mountain Collapsing Palm!

In a moment of daze, it felt as if the heaven and earth had dimmed in the face of this palm. Even if his opponent was another Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle expert, he was confident he could overpower the other party easily!

This was the strongest battle technique he had up his sleeves. The bizarre means of the fellow before him had sent warning bells ringing in his head, so he decided to use his strongest technique right from the get go.

He thought that he would be able to send that fellow flying in an instant with this strike, incapacitating him. But who knew that before his palm could even reach, he would hear the other party's excited voice.

"A head-on confrontation? Great!"

Following which, the young man before him agilely dodged to his

left.

"This..." Upon seeing this maneuver, the masked man's soul nearly fled his body from fright.

The other party's hand was headed right for where the mingmen of his Mountain Collapsing Palm was located!

Every technique had its own flaws, this was something inevitable. However, as long as one were to move with sufficient speed, one could prevent one's opponent from exploiting one's weaknesses. As such, in a battle among experts, it was rare to see the striking of mingmen.

However, it was as if that fellow had known the flaws of his Mountain Collapsing Palm from the very start, moving right into his blind spot to strike his mingmen as soon as he began executing the technique.

Putting aside how he knew the mingmen of his technique, to be able to recognize it and react instantaneously, how deep of an understanding of the Mountain Collapsing Palm must he possess?

However, at this crucial moment, he had no time to process his shock at all. His rapidly twitching eyes saw the young man's finger leisurely reaching for the weakness in his technique, but due to the immense momentum from his offense, he couldn't move away at all.

Pu!

It was just a light jab, but his body was immediately sent flying into his distance. His zhenqi was sent into disarray, and fresh blood spurted from his mouth like a fountain. Eventually, he struck a tree and fell to the ground.

That jab had precisely struck the center of his flow of zhenqi, sending the zhenqi in his body into a devastating rampage instantaneously, tearing apart his meridians and acupoints. Even if he were to recover from his injury, his cultivation was pretty much

crippled at this point.

Sensing the changes in his body, tears flowed down the masked man's face.

He had practiced the Mountain Collapsing Palm to a very high level, making it difficult for his opponent to notice the flaws in his technique. How in the world did that fellow find it and even strike it precisely without the slightest deviation?

If only he'd known that such a situation would occur, he would have never used the Mountain Collapsing Palm against that young fellow...

After knocking out all four of them, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief and instructed, "Alright, bring those fellows to me!"

Roar!

Hearing the orders, the Great Violetwing Beast immediately got into action.

"Young Master, you're here!"

"Teacher!"

Sun Qiang, Zheng Yang, Wang Ying, and the others rushed out upon hearing the ruckus outside, and they immediately saw Zhang Xuan's silhouette beneath the night sky.

The group walked into the residence, and after taking a seat, Zhang Xuan asked with a frown, "Right, did you offend anyone in the capital or cause any trouble somewhere?"

"Offend anyone? Cause trouble? We didn't!" Sun Qiang replied.

"If you didn't do anything, why would four Ethereal Treading realm experts be lurking around the residence?" Zhang Xuan questioned sternly.

"Four Ethereal Treading realm experts?" Upon hearing those words, Sun Qiang immediately leaped in shock.

At that moment, "putong!", a stack of bodies was suddenly tossed at the doorway of the main hall by the Great Violetwing Beast.

"Take a look yourself!" Zhang Xuan pointed to the doorway.

Sun Qiang walked to the doorway and examined the faces of those masked men before shaking his head in confusion. "I don't recognize any of these men..."

"If you don't know them, why would they be loitering around our residence?"

However, what Zhang Xuan faced was only the bewildered gazes of his students and butler. Thus, he sighed deeply and waved his hands. "Bring them in!"

Roar!

The four men were lifted and dumped into the main hall.

As they had been fighting in the dark previously, Zhang Xuan didn't have an opportunity to examine the profile of his opponents. Under the illumination from the Night Illumination Pearls in the room, he saw four middle-aged men, seemingly in their forties. They had a dark skin-tone and a large physique.

"Who are you? Why are you lurking around this residence?" Zhang Xuan turned to the Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle cultivator, the only one conscious of the four, and harrumphed.

"We were just passing by this area; we didn't mean to alarm you," the other party replied.

"Passing by?" Seeing how the other party was still trying to deny the matter, a sharp glint flashed across Zhang Xuan's eyes as he waved his hands and instructed, "Kill them and toss their bodies outside the city!"

He was already in a bad mood, and that fellow still dared to play games with him.

Courting death!

Zhang Xuan wasn't fond of bloodshed, but he didn't mind staining his hands with the blood of those who dared to threaten the lives of his students and butler.

Roar!

Hearing the command, the Great Violetwing Beast immediately nodded in excitement. With a deafening roar, its talon swiped right for the four men.

If it were to land on them, their heads would surely explode on the spot.

"D-d-don't kill me! I'll speak! I'll speak!" The lack of hesitation from the young man before him in ordering for their deaths sent a cold chill down the man's spine. "I was only obeying orders from my master, I beg of you to spare my life..."

The man knew that he would never get an opportunity to speak again if he didn't speak now, so he immediately gave in.

"Orders? Whose?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"The Spirit Emporium..." the man replied.

"Spirit Emporium?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had never heard of that place before, so why would the other party go after him?

"You are from the Spirit Emporium?" Sun Qiang froze for an instant before clasp his fist toward Zhang Xuan. "Young Master, the Spirit Emporium is a shop in Hongyuan City which deals with artifacts... Just today, I visited its storefront!"

"You visited the Spirit Emporium?" Zhang Xuan asked questioningly.

"Yes. After all, we are a little short on money at the moment... Thus, I thought of selling the treasures you have gathered from Huanyu Empire to tide us through this period, and after asking around, I eventually found the Spirit Emporium," Sun Qiang

explained.

Back in Huanyu Empire's Mystical Treasure Hall, he had acquired quite a few artifacts, but he hadn't found an opportunity to sell them so far. However, with their finances running low, Sun Qiang had no choice but to sell those artifacts.

Who would have thought that he would end up drawing eyes to their group?

"I see." After asking a few more questions, Zhang Xuan soon got a clear grasp of the situation.

Even though the Spirit Emporium appeared to be a proper business on the surface, it was in fact a black market headed by a dangerous organization. Through their official business, they were able to find potential targets which their members could rob from to earn easy bucks.

Sun Qiang, Zheng Yang, and the others possessed weak cultivation, but they carried immense wealth with them. How could the Spirit Emporium possibly let such an easy target go?

Thus, the Spirit Emporium dispatched these four men for them. The main role of these four men was to scout their targets to ensure that there were no experts in their midst. If the targets were within their capability, they would then conduct an attack and plunder their wealth.

"How dare they try to rob my students and butler? They must be tired of living!" Zhang Xuan's face darkened.

They should already be thanking the gods that he hadn't brought destruction upon their organization yet, but to think that they would be so brazen as to lay their eyes on his students and butler instead!

Zhang Xuan turned to Sun Qiang and asked, "Where is the Spirit Emporium?"

"It isn't too far from here. It should be a ten-minute journey on

foot!" Sun Qiang replied.

"Alright then. Make preparations, we'll pay them a visit at dawn!" Zhang Xuan commanded with narrowed eyes.

If he hadn't come back on a whim, what would be awaiting him might very well be a river of blood and lifeless corpses.

Zheng Yang and the others had accompanied him throughout his journey, and he had already regarded them as his kin. Those who dare to inflict harm on his kin must be prepared to face his devastating fury!

If he couldn't even protect his students and butler, what was the use of him pursuing even greater power?

"Yes!"

Hearing the veiled fury behind the young master's words, Sun Qiang nodded.

Having accompanied the young master from Tianxuan Kingdom to here, he had gotten a clear grasp of the latter's personality.

The young master was an easy-going person who was usually fine with anything. However, if anyone dared to threaten the safety of those around him, he would transform into a demon, destroying every single enemy in his way.

Back then, when Lu Chong was mortally wounded by Ding Chong, Zhang Xuan charged singlehandedly into Xuanyuan Kingdom to destroy its royal family, exacting vengeance for his student.

Since the Spirit Emporium had dared to lay its hands on them, the same fate would likely befall them.

Sun Qiang pointed to the four men in the center of the main hall and asked, "What do we do with these men?"

Zhang Xuan harrumphed.

"Cripple their cultivation and tie them up. We'll send them back

as gifts at daylight!"

"Yes!" Sun Qiang nodded before carrying the four men down with the Great Violetwing Beast.

With their departure, only Zhang Xuan, Zheng Yang, and his other students were left in the room.

Zhang Xuan had them execute a battle technique each and offered them some pointers on their techniques. Following which, he imparted them a simplified version of the Cosmos Bridge realm Heaven's Path Divine Art before dismissing them so that they could spend the night slowly deciphering its essence.

After which, he returned back to his room.

Hu la!

With a flick of his wrist, a massive ape appeared before him.

Byzantium Helios Beast!

He had stuffed this fellow into the Myriad Anthive Nest earlier this afternoon, and since there was some time now, he decided to take it out.

"You... What do you want to do?"

The Byzantium Helios Beast had severe wounds inflicted all over its body, and its body was tightly bound, sealing his movements. Upon seeing the face of the 'Otherworldly Demonic Tribe's royalty', it immediately gritted its teeth and roared in hostility, "Kill me if you want to, but don't even dream of making me betray my master!"

...

At the same moment, in a magnificent courtyard within the Master Teacher Academy, an elder abruptly stood up.

"Mu shi, what's wrong?" a calm voice asked by the side.

If the head of the Apothecary School was here, he would surely

recognize the owner of the voice was the 'junior' whom Mu shi recommended here—Luo Ruoxin.

"Lady Ruoxin... I think I sense the aura of Byzantium Helios Beast!" Mu shi replied.

Strangely, his attitude was extremely respectful, unlike how one would usually treat a junior.

Most likely, Luo Ruoxin might really be a lady from one of the Sage Clans, just as everyone had guessed.

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"Byzantium Helios Beast?" The young lady frowned. "Do you mean the tamed beast of the old principal?"

"That's the case." Mu shi nodded. "I am an old friend of the old principal, so I am familiar with his tamed beast as well. Even though the aura is extremely weak, I am certain that it is him!"

As a close friend of the missing old principal, he was acquainted with Byzantium Helios Beast as well.

It was just this afternoon that he heard that the other party had been kidnapped by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, so how could he remain calm when he sensed his aura at this very moment?

Knowing what Mu shi was thinking, the young lady said, "Go and take a look then."

"Yes!" Mu shi nodded in gratitude before rushing in the direction of where the aura was coming from.

Watching Mu shi's departing back, Luo Ruoxin sighed deeply.

"Since it's so easy for him to find what he seeks, why can't it be the same for me? If only I'd known earlier, I'd have brought that with me. Now that I can only sense the rough region where it is, who knows how long it'll take before I can find it..." Rubbing her glabella, she shook her head before turning her gaze back to the night sky.

Just like that, the young lady stared deeply into the depths of the night sky, creating a transient painting of tranquility.

...

"Hah, you sure are loyal to your master!" Seeing the Byzantium Helios Beast declaring his fealty to his master, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Who knew what kind of magic potion the Otherworldly Demons

fed this fellow for it to obstinately hold onto their secrets despite the beatings it had taken?

"Are you really not afraid of death?" Zhang Xuan asked coldly.

"What is there to fear from death? If I can be with my master after death, why should I be afraid?" the Byzantium Helios Beast roared.

"This fellow..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

The other party was extremely adamant on his view, unwilling to budge in the least.

What in the world was this?

The spirit beasts whom he had met before would usually be settled with just a kick or two, but not only did this fellow refuse to submit after all that beating, it still remained obstinately loyal to its previous master.

Honestly speaking, even Zhang Xuan was feeling a little impressed by now.

Its willpower was indeed commendable.

"This place isn't wide enough..."

Seeing that the other party was unwilling to submit, Zhang Xuan was just about to give it another beating when he looked at the cramped room he was in and frowned.

The residence which Sun Qiang had gotten them was simply too small. If he were to summon the puppets here to pummel the Byzantium Helios Beast, the entire residence might just be torn down by them.

If even this residence were to be destroyed, where else would his students stay?

He had already used up his money on this residence, so it was impossible to purchase another one at this point.

"Forget it, I'll head outside the city then!" Zhang Xuan muttered.

As long as he traveled a fitting distance away from the city walls, he should be able to do as he pleased without alarming anyone.

With such a thought in mind, he flicked his wrist and placed that fellow back into the Myriad Anthive Nest.

After which, he walked out of his room, activated the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, and headed to the skies.

As the residence was located in a rural part of the city, there were almost no guards or sentries stationed nearby, so there was no need for him to restrict himself. Furthermore, as unlikely as it was, it would still be better to have the Great Violetwing Beast guard the residence in case the Spirit Emporium sent another wave of assassins for them.

When it came to the safety of his students and butler, it was better to be safe than sorry.

Right after Zhang Xuan left the residence, another figure soaring through the night sky came to an abrupt halt.

"Hmm? His aura disappeared?" A white-bearded elder looked around him in confusion and frowned—Mu shi.

As soon as he sensed the Byzantium Helios Beast's aura, he immediately rushed over. But just as he was about to zero in on the source of the aura, it abruptly vanished, as if it had never been there in the first place.

"Was he captured once more?" Mu shi frowned.

Even though he had declared that anyone who found the Byzantium Helios Beast would be declared as the next principal, this didn't mean that he should remain idle when an opportunity to save the latter appeared before him.

The Byzantium Helios Beast was the tamed beast of his old pal, and he had slain many Otherworldly Demons in his time, saving

countless humans from harm.

"There is someone there!" Scanning the area, Mu shi suddenly spotted a silhouette on the horizon.

Even though he couldn't determine the extent of the other party's cultivation, he should still be a Saint at the very minimum, considering that he was capable of flight.

"To be traveling in the middle of the night, there's something amiss here..." Mu shi frowned. "I should go over and take a look!"

With such a thought in mind, he rushed toward the silhouette.

Every single Saint realm expert in Hongyuan City wielded immense prestige, and very few of them would choose to travel in the night. On top of that, the other party appeared as soon as the Byzantium Helios Beast's aura vanished. This made the situation even more suspicious.

'Hmm? Someone is following me?' In the midst of his flight, Zhang Xuan suddenly noticed something, and his eyelids started twitching.

His current plan was simple: find a quiet place, teach the Byzantium Helios Beast a lesson, and force it to spew out the whereabouts of the Otherworldly Demons it was serving. Who would have thought that he would be followed as soon as he left his residence?

"To be able to mobilize even Saint realm experts, it seems like the water in the Spirit Emporium runs deeper than I thought!" Considering how his pursuer was flying in midair as well, there was no doubt about it—he was a Saint realm expert!

This fellow appeared right after he had subdued the four masked men, so the chances were that the Spirit Emporium had sent him here as well!

To have such an expert make a move over just that bit of wealth, the Spirit Emporium sure was persistent!

'Could it be that... there are some precious artifacts amongst the items received from the Mystical Treasure Hall that I don't know of?'

As he had obtained simply far too many objects from the Mystical Treasure Hall, he hadn't bothered checking them properly.

However, considering that it was from Huanyu Empire, it should be unlikely for it to be worth much in Hongyuan Empire. Yet, the Spirit Emporium actually mobilized a Saint realm expert for his possession!

This was no different from making a mountain out of a molehill!

'I should lure him out of the city and get rid of him!' The more Zhang Xuan thought about it, the more furious he felt.

To send one wave after another, was the Spirit Emporium not tired of such games yet?

'Dispatching four Ethereal Treading experts is already bad enough, but to even mobilize a Saint realm expert for us... Are you really that intent on seeing me rip apart your organization?

'So what if your men have reached Saint realm?

'Not even the Byzantium Helios Beast could subdue me, let more your men!

'If a war is what you want, I don't mind allowing Vicious and the other Otherworldly Demon puppets to make another appearance!

'Did you think that you could climb over my head just because I am a newcomer in Hongyuan City?

'No, I should still hold myself back. The Byzantium Helios Beast has pledged allegiance to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, so there is no harm in killing him. However, the enemy this time around is a human, and the Spirit Emporium is aware of this operation as well. If the other party were to be killed and an investigation were to be conducted, I might risk exposing the

existence of the Otherworldly Demon puppets!'

While Zhang Xuan wanted to eliminate the conceited fellow pursuing him, he knew that he mustn't act recklessly.

Saints were the top powers in the city. The death of any single one of them would cause a huge uproar, so it would be best to avoid that altogether. On top of that, given that the Saint realm expert was dispatched to deal with Sun Qiang, the Spirit Emporium would surely know that their group was the culprit.

If the Spirit Emporium were to pull some strings and make a case against them, Zhang Xuan might eventually come under scrutiny as well.

And if the Otherworldly Demon puppets and Vicious were revealed to be in his possession in the midst of the investigation, it would be difficult for him to account for that.

After all, how could a mere 4-star master teacher possess the ability to tame the head of the Otherworldly Demons and make those puppets obey his orders obediently?

There was no way he could absolve himself of blame once this was exposed, so he had to ensure that he wasn't put into such a situation in the first place.

'But if I don't get rid of him, that will be a potential threat looming above me... What can I do?'

Considering the vicious deeds that the Spirit Emporium had committed over the years, what if the Saint realm expert were to lay their hands on him, or even worse, his students?

He couldn't possibly just sit idly and watch it all happen!

'Seems like it's about time to let Yang shi make an appearance!' After a long moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan made up his mind.

With his current capability, without tapping into the strength of Vicious or the Otherworldly Demon puppets, it was impossible for

him to stand against a Saint realm expert. The only way he could get out of this situation was to... hoodwink the other party!

This wasn't his first time doing something like this anyway.

As long as the other party acknowledged him as his teacher, the Spirit Emporium would be unable to send the other party after him.

With these thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan began reshaping his appearance to take on Yang Xuan's form.

As his mastery of Heaven's Path Golden Body deepened, he became more and more proficient in warping his muscles to alter his physical appearance, making it difficult for even a 6-star pinnacle master teacher to see through the disguise.

Not even Mo Gaoyuan had suspected that he and Yang shi were the same person back then.

Considering that his back was against the other party, it was late at night, and the other party hadn't seen his appearance yet, he should be able to discreetly alter his appearance without the other party noticing.

After warping his appearance, he drove his Heaven's Path zhenqi to alter the aura around him to create a fleeting and unfathomable impression.

When all was done, he heaved a sigh of relief before discreetly sending a glance behind.

'Flaws!' Zhang Xuan muttered internally.

In a sense, the flight of a Saint could be considered as the execution of a battle technique as well as it required one to drive their zhenqi, so he was able to compile a book on the other party via the Library of Heaven's Path.

Weng!

The Library of Heaven's Path jolted as a book materialized.

As Zhang Xuan's body continued soaring ahead, his consciousness was already immersed in the Library of Heaven's Path, reading the book which had just been compiled.

"Mu Yuan, 7-star master teacher from the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion. Saint realm 3-dan cultivator. Flaws: ..."

'7-star master teacher? Saint realm 3-dan cultivator?' Zhang Xuan's lips twitched as he nearly fell from the sky.

What was with the backing of the Spirit Emporium?!

How could they possibly be able to mobilize a 7-star master teacher as well?

Why would someone of the other party's standing travel all the way from the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion just to grab his possessions? Was this for real?

'It's fortunate that I didn't bring out the puppets, or else the one who would have been destroyed is me...' While Zhang Xuan felt frustrated inside, he also felt relieved as well.

He could easily deal with Saint 1-dan and 2-dan spirit beasts with his bunch of puppets, but it would be a little iffy when it came to 3-dan.

At Saint 1-dan Void Pursuit realm, Saints would open the Zhukong acupoint, thus gaining the ability of free flight.

At Saint 2-dan Spiritual Perception realm, Saints would open their Incipient Eye, allowing them to extend their psyche over a distance, perceiving everything within their range spiritually.

Saint 3-dan Embryonic Soul realm was, in some ways, similar to Chrysalis realm. In the latter, one would gather the zhenqi stored within the dantian to forge an Embryonic Core, otherwise termed as Golden Core. As for the former, an Embryonic Soul reminiscent of an infant would break out of the Embryonic Core. As a result, this realm was also termed as Origin Soul realm.

Once one's soul had been tempered into an Origin Soul, it would be able to tap into the power of the world. At this realm, one could be considered to have taken one's first step into Sainthood, gaining the ability to overturn oceans and move mountains at a thought.

Furthermore, this would be done not through brute force but via zhenqi itself.

Against a Saint 2-dan, Zhang Xuan's twenty Otherworldly Demon puppets could still overwhelm them with numbers. However, if the enemy was an Embryonic Soul realm expert, such a strategy wouldn't work.

Even if he were to call upon Vicious' prowess as well, it was impossible to tell if that fellow had any other trump cards up his sleeves.

If he wanted to call upon the Otherworldly Demon puppets and Vicious, he would have to be completely certain that he would be able to kill the other party. Otherwise, it would bring endless trouble upon him.

'Forget it, I should see what kind of flaws he has and use it against him!'

Since neither fight nor flight was an option, he could only rely on his glib tongue to hoodwink the other party into obeying his commands. Success, he would be spared from danger, but failure... he would be squashed on the spot.

Swiftly browsing through the other party's flaws, Zhang Xuan suddenly saw something that left his mouth widened and eyes bulging.

'This...'

Chapter 750 Who Are You

The content of the book was simply too shocking. Even with Zhang Xuan's worldliness, he still found it hard to believe his eyes.

'Forget it...'

However, this wasn't the time to touch on that, so he swiftly closed the book and went through the contents once more in his head. After ensuring that everything was correct, he drove his zhenqi and abruptly stopped in midair.

Flinging his sleeves, he placed his hands behind his back and stood silently, not even bothering to turn his head around. For an instant, his dashing profile resembled an immortal departing on the clouds.

"The friend behind, surely you should be contented with following me this far?" His cold voice echoed in the night sky.

"Oh, I sensed the aura of a close friend, so I came over to take a look. On my way, I happened to catch sight of you, and my curiosity got the better of me... However, I must say that you do look rather unfamiliar. Are you from Hongyuan City?" Mu shi replied with a smile.

Even though he suspected that the man standing before him was related to the disappearance of Byzantium Helios Beast, he had no concrete evidence to prove it, so there was no way he could accuse the other party of the matter. Thus, he decided that he would engage the other party in a conversation in hopes of uncovering some clues from his words.

Standing with his back facing the other party, Zhang Xuan harrumphed.

"As a master teacher from Qingyuan Conferred Empire, how many of Hongyuan City's experts could you possibly know?"

"You know that I'm from Qingyuan Conferred Empire?" Mu shi

was taken aback.

All along, the other party hadn't even turned around, and he didn't reveal his true cultivation either. How did the other party know that he was from Qingyuan Conferred Empire?

"The convergence of zhenqi at the Yehai acupoint before flowing through the Three Mystic Acupoints, Nihai, Wuwei, and Durang. Gathering the wood attribute spiritual energy from the world to nourish your body, but skipping out on the Huaihai and Longzhen acupoints... Such a bizarre cultivation technique doesn't exist in Hongyuan City, or even in Qingyuan Conferred Empire at that. If I'm not mistaken, you must be a member of the Mu Clan, one of the Sage Clans!" an impassive voice explained from the front.

"Who are you?" Alarmed, Mu shi narrowed his eyes.

There was nearly no one who knew that he was from the Mu Clan, and this included his closest friends in Qingyuan Conferred Empire as well. Yet, the other party spoke of it casually as if it couldn't be any more obvious... What was the identity of the man standing before him?

On top of that, the zhenqi circulation method that the other party had just mentioned was a secret art of the Mu Clan, exclusive to their own clansmen. How could the other party know about it?

Could he be... a member of the Mu Clan as well?

Astonished, Mu shi immediately extended his Spiritual Perception over and examine the man in front of him, only to realize that he was peering into an abyss. The other party's aura was so profound and deep that all he could manage was to scratch at the surface.

Considering that the other party could see through his identity and cultivation with a glance, but he wasn't able to do the same... Could it mean that the man before him was even stronger than he was?

Since when had there been such an expert in Hongyuan City?

"Who am I?" Upon hearing Mu shi's question, the man seemed to have been thrown into an ocean of nostalgia. Eventually, he shook his head and replied, "It seems it has been far too long since my last appearance that those of the younger generation can't even recognize me!"

There was a short moment of silence before the man continued asking impassively, "Who is the current head of the Mu Clan?"

Mu shi was reluctant to respond to that question, but after a moment of hesitation, he still decided to speak up. "The current clan head is my uncle, Mu Yan. May I ask if the senior in front knows of my uncle?"

The current head of the Mu Clan, Mu Yan, wielded immense reputation within the Master Teacher Pavilion of Conferred Empires, so there was nothing much for him to hide.

He phrased his words carefully to indicate his identity as well, in hopes that he could exert some pressure on the other party and gain dominance over this exchange.

"Mu Yan?" The figure in front shook his head. "Never seen him before. However, I did meet with his father on one occasion!"

"Father? You mean... Old Ancestor Mu Tian?" Mu shi froze for an instant before shock embraced every inch of him.

Mu Yan's father, as well as Mu shi's grandfather, Mu Tian, was an ancient relic whose age exceeded 1300.

While Sainthood did alter the fundamental nature of one's existence, allowing one to live a lifespan exceeding that of ordinary humans, 1000 years was usually the limit for most. Never had there been a Saint who had gone beyond 2000 years in age before.

Thus, those who had lived beyond a thousand could be considered an old ancestor of the clan, and they would hardly leave the confines of the main residence.

To have met with Old Ancestor Mu Tian... Could the man be another old monster from the same era as him?

But that was impossible!

Even if those from that era was still living at this point in time, they wouldn't dare to travel beyond the confines of their residence so easily. In order to clutch onto the final sparks of life, they had to utilize all kinds of means... Otherwise, the heavens would mercilessly fall upon them and reap their lives.

While he was unable to see through the cultivation of the man, he could clearly feel the overwhelming vitality within his body. This was unlike the wither that those old monsters suffered from.

"Yes, that lad Mu Tian..." The man spoke deeply, his voice carrying the vicissitudes of life.

"Lad..." Mu shi's eyebrows shot up.

Old Ancestor Mu Tian was a 1300-year-old ancient relic, and yet the other party called him a lad?

Just as Mu shi was overwhelmed with shock, the person in front of him spoke up once again.

"The zhenqi of your Mu Clan is centered around balance and harmony, allowing them to conceal their aura at will. However, your aura feels unstable, and it seems like your meridians have grown rigid. It seems like it has been many years since you have last returned to your clan."

"This..."

The other party was right, it had indeed been many years since he last returned to the Mu Clan. It was to the point where most of those in the Mu Clan had already forgotten about his existence.

"Your aura feels heavy. Wood attribute zhenqi should be ethereal, but I can feel the heaviness of the metal attribute within it. If I'm not mistaken, it isn't that you are unwilling to return to

your clan, but that you were expelled from it," that voice continued.

"H-h-how did you know?" Shocked, Mu shi nearly lost control of himself and plummeted to the ground.

The other party's deductions were spot-on.

The reason why he hadn't returned to his clan after so many years was not because he was unwilling to, but that he had been expelled and he was too ashamed to return.

However... this was a secret he had hidden in the depths of his heart, and he had never spoken about it to another soul before. On the other hand, the Mu Clan regarded it as a huge humiliation, so it was impossible for them to have leaked the news either. How did the man before him learn of this matter?

Did he really guess this much just by peering into his zhenqi circulation?

If that was the case, wasn't the man before him a little too overpowered!

How could there be a person in the world with such discerning eyes?

"As a person who cultivates wood attribute zhenqi, your Yingtai and Tianmen acupoints should have a slight tinge of green, but it is taking on a dark shade of red instead. With just a glance, one can tell that it's the result of conflicting energies within your body. Of the five elements, wood curbs earth, earth curbs water, water curbs fire, fire curbs metal, and metal curbs wood. The only element that could cause such immense damage to your body is metal. If I'm not mistaken, someone must have planted some form of metal attribute energy within your body, thus suppressing your cultivation and talent!" the man in front replied.

"This..." Mu shi's body stiffened.

Every single word that the other party spoke dredged up the

secrets which he had sealed in the bottom of his heart, leaving him terrified and apprehensive.

The other party was right, he was indeed expelled from his clan. However, it wasn't that he was framed, but that he had committed an unforgivable act.

The story had to be traced back to five hundred years ago.

Back then, the young and talented him had become a 6-star master teacher before even reaching his forties, making him a celebrated genius within the clan.

He'd thought that with such talent, even at the very worst, he would become one of the core elders of the clan and leave his mark in history. Who could have known that... in one of the experiential training sessions, he would meet with a fair maiden whom, after going through a life-and-death situation with, he would deeply fall in love with.

He'd thought that even if nothing else in this world was constant, their love would be perpetual. He devoted his entire life to her, even going to the extent of imparting his clan's exclusive cultivation technique to her.

But eventually, he found out that the other party was making use of him to exact vengeance on his clan.

His clan soon learned of this issue, and with the crime of leaking out the clan's confidential secrets and bringing an enemy into their midst, he was expelled from the clan!

After leaving the clan, he learned that the woman had planted a metal attribute energy deep inside his body at some point, suppressing his cultivation.

As a result, despite five hundred years of effort, he had only managed to progress from 6-star to 7-star high-tier, unable to advance any further than that.

Ashamed, he had always hidden this wound in the depths of his

heart, unwilling to reveal it to anyone else. But the other party was able to see through it just by looking at his acupoints and zhenqi... Even 7-star master teachers didn't possess such an eye of discernment!

Could he be... an 8-star master teacher?

But how could that be?

Beyond 6-star, every single rank progression would become exponentially more difficult, as if trying to surmount a mountain that became increasingly steeper with every step taken. Take him for example, it had been three hundred years since he had become a 7-star high-tier master teacher, but he was still unable to take the next step forward.

As such, 8-star master teachers were extremely rare, and each and every one of them was a well-known figure whose reputation resounded throughout the Master Teacher Continent.

If the other party was an 8-star master teacher, he should have at least heard of him... But the other party didn't seem to fit any of the profiles of the 8-star master teachers he knew.

Furthermore, why would an 8-star master teacher appear in Hongyuan Empire?

"With your cultivation suppressed by the metal attribute energy within you, you know that it is impossible for you to progress any further in your cultivation. Thus, you decided to stop cultivating altogether and spend your time with nature instead... So many years have already passed, don't you want to return back to your Mu Clan and visit your family?" the man in front asked.

"I... Even if I wish to return, how can I?" Mu shi's face flushed in agitation.

His clan was where his family and friends were, how could he possibly not want to return?

But... How could he return?

Putting aside how his cultivation was beginning to decline under the backlash of the metal attribute energy within his body, just the deed he had done five hundred years ago left him too ashamed to return.

"It was fate that I met that lad Mu Tian many years ago, and it's also fate that we met one another. Since that's the case, allow me to offer a pointer then. Perhaps, you might be able to break out of the chains you are trapped in." The man in front waved his hands.

"Pointer?" Mu shi was surprised by those words.

"That's right. While it's hard for you to expel the metal attribute energy in your body due to your cultivation being suppressed by it, it isn't entirely impossible to do it. I'll impart a zhenqi circulation method to you, and as long as you practice it diligently, recovery won't be an issue!" the man in front said.

"You will... impart a zhenqi circulation method to me? Who are you?" Mu shi narrowed his eyes.

In fear of crossing the laws of the world, high-ranked master teachers wouldn't offer their guidance to anyone easily, unless there was a karmic debt involved.

Take Empyrean Kong shi for example, even though he was known to have more than three thousand students, only 72 of them had received his true heritage.

It was the first time that the both of them had met, so why should the other party offer him a pointer?

He might have been a genius when he was younger, but with his bodily function deteriorating and his cultivation declining, the potential he once wielded had already been sapped dry. What was the other party's goal for helping him?

The ploy he had fallen into when he was younger had already cost him dearly; he wouldn't allow himself to fall into another scheme easily.

"Who am I?" The figure in front burst into laughter.

"Are you doubting my identity?"

Hong long!

As soon as those words were spoken, an overwhelming aura abruptly burst from that man's body.

Upon feeling the oppressive aura that the other party was exerting, Mu shi's body tensed up, and his blood ran cold.

Before the compelling might of the other party, the strength which he had always taken pride in seemed as weak as a measly ant's. It was as though, if the other party willed it so, he could be torn to shreds the very next moment.

Hong long long!

Just as he was being suffocated by the immense power crushing down on him, the other party's aura abruptly changed. This time, it felt as if it harnessed the might of the world around him, creating an inviolable authority to his presence.

It was as if the man before him was acknowledged by the heavens, his presence carrying the weight of the world itself. There was no being that was worthy of standing as an equal with him.

"Celestial Master Teacher? You are... a Celestial Master Teacher?"

A thought flashed across Mu shi's mind, and his body began shaking uncontrollably.

Chapter 751 Grandteacher

Celestial Master Teachers possessed the recognition of the heavens. Their aura carried the might of the world, forcing all beings to submit to them.

In the long history of the Master Teacher Continent, the only man who was known to have become a Celestial Master Teacher was only Kong shi himself. Even his direct disciples, the 72 Sages, hadn't reached such a level, and yet the man before him was actually a Celestial Master Teacher...

A freezing chill ran through Mu shi's body, and the immense fear he felt left him incapable of speaking.

A Celestial Master Teacher was an existence whom even the heavens recognized, and yet he actually doubted such a person...

At this moment, he was really dying to give himself two sharp slaps for the foolishness he had spouted!

Hu!

Amidst his trembling, the figure ahead of him casually waved his hands, and that terrifying aura vanished instantaneously, returning an unnerving calm to the night.

At the same time, the figure turned around as well.

He was a middle-aged man somewhere between his thirties and forties. He had a pair of sharp eyes that were gleaming with wisdom, and vaguely, one could see several thin strings floating within.

"Eye of Insight..." Mu shi's body trembled in shock yet again.

Even though it was said that a master teacher could comprehend Eye of Insight upon reaching 6-star, the truth was that only the greatest of geniuses were able to do so. Even within the Sage Clans, it was extremely rare to see anyone comprehending the Eye of

Insight.

Putting everything aside, even him, a famed genius of the Mu Clan back in his days, didn't succeed in comprehending the Eye of Insight.

If only he had comprehended it, he wouldn't have been toyed with by another back then, resulting in his current plight.

Of the Ten Great Master Teachers in Hongyuan Empire, not a single one of them had comprehended the Eye of Insight... Through this, it could be seen how difficult the feat was.

This explained why the other party was able to see through his problems with just a glance and deduce that he was expelled from the Mu Clan...

Probably only someone who possessed the Eye of Insight would be able to do so!

At this instant, the final sliver of doubt that Mu shi harbored finally vanished, leaving nothing but respect for the man before him.

Not daring to pull his weight before the other party, he bowed deeply and said, "I apologize for my insolence. I beseech elder to enlighten me..."

"Alright." The middle-aged man nodded. "That's more like it. You should be glad that I don't have the interest of squabbling with a junior. Stand still and don't resist it!"

The middle-aged man raised his hand and flicked his finger.

Suddenly, Mu shi felt a jolt run through his body as a zhenqi circulation method suddenly came into his mind. Every single word was extremely vivid, as though they were imprinted right onto his consciousness.

"Soul Impartation?" Mu shi's face paled.

As a 7-star master teacher, his soul was already sufficiently

powerful to conduct Soul Impartation as well. However, to do it from such a far distance away, and for the content to be so clearly imprinted into his mind at that... Not even an 8-star low-tier master teacher could do that!

Fearsome!

As expected of a Celestial Master Teacher!

"The Huaihai and Longzhen acupoints represent water and dragon respectively; those are the acupoints where water attribute spiritual energy usually gathers in the human body. Due to the unique cultivation technique of the Mu Clan, it's inevitable that you avoided channeling spiritual energy into those two acupoints.

"However, with your wood attribute zhenqi suppressed by the metal attribute energy, you could use these two acupoints to your advantage and resolve your problem. In the elemental cycle, water gives rise to wood. It can empower your wood attribute zhenqi, giving you the strength to overwhelm the metal attribute energy rampaging within your body!"

After imparting the relevant knowledge, the middle-aged man explained it impassively with his hands behind his back.

At this point, Mu shi had also just finished looking through the zhenqi circulation method which the other party had imparted him. Even though the middle-aged man only touched on the very foundation of cultivation, it was directed toward the root of Mu shi's problem. It was as if the clouds which had veiled his eyes had parted all of the sudden, and before him lay a brand-new world.

If he were to practice the zhenqi circulation method, he was confident that he would be able to suppress the metal attribute energy in his body easily. Perhaps... after a three-hundred-year stagnation, he might finally be able to take another step forward once more!

To be able to see through the problems in his cultivation and

offer a solution to it... The man before him was truly fearsome!

Bowing politely, Mu shi asked, "Teacher, I am deeply grateful to you for your enlightenment. If it's not beyond me, may I ask for your esteemed name?"

As simple as the other party's teachings might have been, it had resolved the issues which had plagued him for several centuries. Considering what the other party had done for him, it wouldn't be too much to address him as 'teacher'.

Besides, if he could acknowledge such a formidable man as his teacher and receive his guidance, he might just be able to return to his clan one day.

"Teacher?" the middle-aged man opposite to him frowned.

It seemed as if he was displeased with that address.

"I apologize, I seem to have been getting ahead of myself. Given that you are a peer of my old ancestor, I should be calling you grandteacher..." Mu shi suddenly realized the other party's ties with his old ancestor, so he swiftly changed his words with a fearful shudder.

"Ah?" Hearing Mu shi's words, the middle-aged man seemed to become even more astonished.

Naturally, the 'middle-aged man' was Zhang Xuan. The reason he'd assumed Yang Xuan's identity was in hopes that he could strike fear into the heart of the other party and resolve the current crisis he was in. He'd thought that with the zhenqi circulation method he had imparted, the other party would consider him as a half-teacher, and that would make him abandon all malicious thoughts against him and his students. Who would have thought that under his hoodwinking, the other party would actually end up acknowledging him as his teacher!

No matter what, the other party was a 7-star master teacher! With such prowess, he could be considered a top-tier power in

Conferred Empires!

For such a figure to acknowledge him as his teacher, it was no wonder that he would be shocked, so he ended up hesitating for an instant. Who could have thought that the moment of hesitation would cause a misunderstanding that resulted in the other party addressing him as grandteacher instead...

The heck!

This change was a way too fast!

But since the other party had already addressed him as grandteacher, it would be awkward to get him to address him as teacher instead. Thus, Zhang Xuan nodded and said, "I am Yang Xuan!"

"Yang Xuan..." Mu shi nodded as he jotted down the name in his head. "May I know where I can find grandteacher if I have any questions for you in the future?"

"It is the work of fate that we met, and it has come to an end with my impartation. If fate wills it, we will meet once more. Otherwise, it can only mean that our paths aren't meant to intersect." Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

It was too tiring for him to put on an act before a 7-star master teacher. He was already exhausted with just a few minutes of disguise, how could he possibly do it in the long run?

Thus, it would be best if they never meet again anymore...

"This..." Seeing that the other party was unwilling to get too involved with him, Mu shi could only clasp his fist and bow to bid the other party farewell in disappointment.

By the time he raised his head once more, the elder before him had already vanished amidst the night sky.

"Yang Xuan, Yang shi..."

Reciting the other party's name in his heart, Mu shi sighed

deeply.

With this matter dealt with, he returned to searching the area for the Byzantium Helios Beast, but with no results whatsoever, he could only return to the academy helplessly.

...

'That was close!'

After getting out of Mu shi's range, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He'd never thought that Mu shi would actually be a member of a Sage Clan, as well as a 7-star master teacher.

Why would a person of such strength and standing work for the Spirit Emporium?

'It seems like he was indeed looking for someone when he met me...' Zhang Xuan thought woefully.

Just what kind of luck did he have?

To think that even just a casual trip out of the city would end with him meeting such a formidable expert! It was fortunate that he had reacted swiftly to hoodwink the other party, otherwise who knew that would remain of him now.

"Forget it. Since my luck isn't too good today, I should return to my residence and rest for the day. I'll think about it after I tear down the Spirit Emporium tomorrow!"

Zhang Xuan was still considering whether he should vent his anger on the Byzantium Helios Beast, but considering the string of misfortunes he'd experienced today, he decided to drop the idea.

Reverting back to his original appearance, Zhang Xuan returned to his residence. When he walked in, he saw that the Great Violetwing Beast had already managed to make the four men bow to it in submission.

Paying it no heed, Zhang Xuan returned straight to his room and

cultivated for a short moment. By the time he opened his eyes once more, the sun had already risen.

Even though he hadn't slept the entire night, he still felt refreshed and energized.

Stretching his back lazily, he walked out of his room.

After eating breakfast, he called Zheng Yang and the others over to decipher some of the intricacies in their cultivation technique before finally heading to the Spirit Emporium with the Great Violetwing Beast, Sun Qiang, and the four masked men.

The Spirit Emporium was the place where most valuable artifacts in Hongyuan City were traded. Even before reaching it, there was already a huge crowd in the area.

"This is a black market, so there is no prohibition on the sales of stolen items as well. On top of that, due to the shady background of these items, their price tends to be lower than the average market price, so it's quite popular among cultivators," Sun Qiang explained.

There were laws in Hongyuan Empire prohibiting robbery and related crimes, so it was impossible to sell stolen artifacts openly. As such, they could only be sold at a lower price in black markets, and the Spirit Emporium was the largest one in Hongyuan Empire.

However, the low prices of its goods did attract a fair number of cultivators.

After all, cultivating was an extremely money-burning activity. Just like Zhang Xuan, most cultivators had no financial backing, so they had to find some way to earn their own spirit stones and resources to advance their cultivation. As such, they were more than glad to scrimp wherever they could.

Soon, Zhang Xuan arrived at a majestic building several dozen meters high.

"To think that the building is a complete system in itself. If I'm

not mistaken, it seems to be a massive, engineered product by celestial designers!" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

Despite the immense size of the Spirit Emporium, it felt like a single entity rather than parts placed together. If his deduction wasn't off, there should be many mechanisms installed within the building to turn it into a massive system of mechanisms.

As expected of the center of Hongyuan City's artifact market, even the venue was an incredible artifact in itself.

If this building were to be put on sale, there was little doubt that it would fetch an astronomical price. Putting everything aside, it would probably take dozens of 5-star celestial engineers at least a year of hard work even if they were to work day and night without rest.

Zhang Xuan walked up to the wall and placed his hand against it. After looking through the details in the Library of Heaven's Path, he nodded in commendation before following the crowd into the building.

The interior of the building was nothing short of magnificent.

All kinds of artifacts were laid around the main hall, and each of them was of decent grade. Even though there was no price labeled on them, considering how so many people were rushing to obtain them, they should be at an affordable range.

"Young Master, look!" At that moment, Sun Qiang's tense voice sounded as he pointed at a certain direction.

Zhang Xuan traced his finger and saw a patrol team walking around the area.

There were six members in the team, and each of them possessed a cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 8-dan at minimum. The one standing at the very front, presumably the leader of the group, was a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Chrysalis realm expert.

"The patrol team is in charge of maintaining order within the

Spirit Emporium. If anyone were to cause trouble in the area, they would be kicked out in an instant," Sun Qiang explained.

Zhang Xuan nodded slightly in response.

With so many artifacts lying around the room, and not to mention the vile deeds the Spirit Emporium did in the shadows, if they didn't possess some backing and power, their business would have long been overturned by rivals and enemies.

"This..." Doubtful, Sun Qiang opened his mouth to say something, but he eventually closed it hesitantly.

Wasn't the young master here to wreak havoc in their place?

But considering how even the patrol team possessed such astounding strength, how were they supposed to cause any trouble?

Most likely, they would be thrown out as soon as they tried to start something.

Knowing what Sun Qiang was thinking about, a chilling smile surfaced on Zhang Xuan's lips.

"Violence is not the only way to wreak havoc..."

Since the Spirit Emporium dared to lay its hands on his students and his butler, it must be taught a lesson.

But was violence the only way to teach someone a lesson?

They were in Hongyuan City, the capital of a Tier-1 Empire, not some shady underworld city. On top of that, Zhang Xuan was a master teacher himself, the role model of the populace. How could someone as noble as him possibly go around using his fists to beat others up?

On the other hand, Sun Qiang blinked in confusion, uncomprehending of what Zhang Xuan was driving at.

"Just follow me!" Zhang Xuan chuckled as his eyes scanned through the various artifacts placed on the shelves.

There was a wide assortment of items—ores, pills, armor, weapon, formation plates... Anything that a cultivator needed, it seemed as if one would surely be able to find it here.

The cultivators in the area were also busy roaming the area, looking around for items suitable for their use.

After a casual walk around the main hall, Zhang Xuan abruptly came to a halt. With a faint smile, he instructed, "Get an attendant over!"

"Yes!"

Sun Qiang had no idea what the young master was up to, but since the latter had issued an instruction, he dared not hesitate. Thus, he immediately made his way to the front reception.

Chapter 752 Zhang Xuan Buys an Artifact

Not too long later, Sun Qiang returned with an attendant. As soon as he caught sight of the young master, he couldn't help but freeze in shock.

At this moment, the young master was wearing an extravagant robe that screamed exorbitance. In his hand was a foldable fan, which he was using to fan himself leisurely. An arrogant smirk sat on his lips. From afar, it looked as if he was a profligate scion.

'What is the young master up to?' Sun Qiang thought in bewilderment.

However, not wanting to foil the young master's ploy, he suppressed his astonishment and walked up to the latter, clasped his fist, and greeted obediently, "Young master!"

Back in Tianxuan Kingdom, the old master had also brought him to Tianyu Trading Firm once and behaved bizarrely. In the end, Ling Tianyu made a personal visit to their residence and even willingly gave up large sums of money to them. Could it be that the young master was trying the same tactic as well?

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded before shooting a sideward glance at the attendant behind Sun Qiang. "You are the manager here?"

The attendant smiled.

"I am not a manager, but I should be able to answer most of your queries..."

The attendant was a young man who seemed to be in his early thirties, possessing the cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 5-dan. As an attendant here, he was in charge of introducing and selling the products on display, so he did possess some authority here.

"That's good. I wish to buy a few items, recommend me some of the more expensive artifacts here!" Zhang Xuan said proudly as he waved his fan leisurely.

'Expensive artifacts?' Sun Qiang's eyelids twitched.

He had conducted business at one point in his life, so he understood the various conventions in the market. For fear of being taken advantage of, most buyers would choose to maintain a low profile, feigning a lack of money just to push down the prices. Yet, the young master had actually asked for the attendant to recommend the expensive artifacts... Wasn't this practically screaming 'I have too much money on hand, please take advantage of me!'?

Such a customer was a dream come true for any store attendant; they would be mistreating themselves if they didn't attempt to make a killing out of him!

Wasn't the young master here to exact vengeance?

Why did it seem as if he was trying to give money to the Spirit Emporium instead?

As expected, upon hearing Zhang Xuan's words, the eyes of the attendant immediately lit up. He immediately walked up to a nearby shelf and gestured toward an item. "Young Master, this Bronze Gong is an excellent artifact smithed by a 6-star blacksmith. It has reached Spirit intermediate-tier..."

On the shelf was a bronze gong with several inscriptions on it. A cold gleam reflected off its surface.

"Let me take a look!" Zhang Xuan gestured for the attendant to bring the Bronze Gong to him.

"Sure!" A gleam flickered across the attendant's eyes as he hurriedly took down the gong and passed it over respectfully with both hands.

Zhang Xuan casually took it and slapped it lightly with his palm.

Weng!

A resounding metallic call echoed from the gong, and a powerful

gale swept into the surroundings, creating an immense pressure on the crowd in the area.

"This is good stuff..." Nodding in satisfaction, Zhang Xuan casually tossed the gong to Sun Qiang before glancing leisurely at the attendant. "How much does it cost?"

After a moment of hesitation, the attendant said, "Young Master, this Bronze Gong was smithed personally by 6-star Blacksmith Zhu Quan more than a hundred years ago. Not only is it a powerful weapon, it can also be considered as a valuable antique with significant history behind it. To be honest, it's one of the top treasures of our Spirit Emporium, so the price... might be a little steep!"

"Here it comes..." Sun Qiang shook his head as he heard the words and the tone of the attendant.

This fellow was indeed scheming. Seeing that the young master was a 'public gold mine', he intentionally phrased his words in a provocative manner, suggesting that the Bronze Gong was beyond the financial ability of the young master.

It was a cliché trick, but somehow, it was peculiarly effective on those prideful profligate scions...

Just as Sun Qiang was thinking that the attendant would be sorely disappointed, the calm young master of his suddenly harrumphed coldly. "A little steep? Are you trying to say that I won't be able to afford it?"

Sun Qiang clutched his forehead and nearly burst into tears.

'Young Master... Are you sure that you are here for vengeance?

'Why does it seem like you are a new rich scion in town asking for others to scam you of your wealth?'

"Of course not, there is no doubt that a man as noble as you will be able to afford it..."

As if embarrassed by his previous doubts, the attendant smiled awkwardly. After which, he gritted his teeth in hesitation, as if he was going to make a huge loss from this deal, before mustering up his determination and said, "This Bronze Gong is worth five thousand middle-tier spirit stones, but your straightforward and candid personality has won my respect. Thus, if you really wish to buy it, I will negotiate with my manager to sell it to you at three thousand spirit stones!"

'Three thousand?' Sun Qiang spewed a mouthful of blood.

What else could this be if not daylight robbery?!

An attendant was marketing this Bronze Gong to another customer when he came yesterday, and the offered price was only one thousand middle-tier spirit stone. But in the end, the customer turned down the deal. Yet, this attendant actually dared to say that it was worth five thousand, and even acted as if he was making a huge loss by selling it at three thousand...

Did he take them to be fools?

Just as Sun Qiang was about to offer a word of advice to the young master, the latter nodded in satisfaction and said, "The work of a 6-star blacksmith is indeed worth such a price. Sun Qiang, wrap it up. I will be taking it!"

"You will be taking it?" Unable to believe his ears, Sun Qiang's body swayed weakly.

Did the young master eat something wrong this morning?

Putting aside the fact that they didn't even have three thousand middle-tier spirit stones with them at the moment, even if they did, they shouldn't waste it on something as useless as this!

What 6-star blacksmith or Zhu Quan whatsoever, it was clear that was all bullshit!

With that much money, one could easily afford a Spirit high-tier weapon! Why would one spend it on this?

But since the young master had said that he would be taking him, it would be inappropriate for him, as a servant, to refute his decision. Thus, he could only go along with it.

The attendant also widened his eyes in surprise at the sight. He didn't think that Zhang Xuan would take down the gong so swiftly.

That useless object had already been sitting on their shelves for several months, and despite their best efforts, they hadn't been able to sell it out. Yet, the other party actually bought it without hesitation. It seemed like he had really happened upon an easy gold mine this time around!

With a hand behind his back and the other fanning him leisurely, Zhang Xuan said impatiently, "Is there anything more expensive and better in the store? Don't tell me that the best product your Spirit Emporium has is only this Spirit intermediate-tier Bronze Gong?"

It was as if the item he had bought was too cheap, unworthy of someone of his standing.

"We do! Of course, we have far better products than the Bronze Gong!" The attendant's eyes lit up. Just as he was about to lead the way to the other shelves, he suddenly paused for an instant before asking, "Young master, regarding the money for the Bronze Gong..."

It wasn't that he didn't trust the young man before him, but it was difficult to tell what could happen in the next moment. To be safe, it would be better for him to collect the money first.

"Are you suggesting that I'll renege on my payment? How dare you!"

As if his dignity had been sullied, Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly. Just as he was about to fly to a temper, he suddenly fell into a momentary contemplation before saying, "Fine, take this. With this, you should work harder on finding items for me!"

With those words, he flicked his wrist and threw a spirit stone over casually.

The attendant caught it and subconsciously glanced at the item in his hand. The next moment, he froze. "High-tier spirit stone..."

The item that the other party had thrown over casually contained spiritual energy so pure that he could feel a tingling sensation in his skin.

It was actually a high-tier spirit stone!

High-tier spirit stones were only useful to Chrysalis realm experts and above. However, due to its rarity, often, only Saint realm experts would have it in their possession. Yet, the other party threw it to him so easily just to purchase the Bronze Gong...

He couldn't help but feel his throat run dry.

"That's right. A high-tier spirit stone is worth ten thousand middle-tier spirit stone, so that should be enough to cover the Bronze Gong, right?" Zhang Xuan sneered coldly.

"Enough, it's more than enough..." The attendant hurriedly nodded.

All the doubts he harbored regarding the customer before him vanished in an instant.

How could a person who would fork out a high-tier spirit stone easily possibly renege on his payment? Most likely, the other party was a young master from some wealthy clan, and having lived in luxury from young, he was accustomed to spending such large sums of money.

"What are you waiting for? Hurry up and lead the way!" Zhang Xuan snapped.

"Yes!" After seeing the high-tier spirit stone, the attitude of the attendant became even more respectful than before.

He hurriedly led them through the crowd, and soon, they arrived

in the depths of the Spirit Emporium.

There were significantly fewer people here, but those who were present here were notable personages in the capital. The items that were placed on the shelves in the room were also clearly much more valuable than those in the main hall.

Zhang Xuan swiftly scanned through the items.

"Spirit high-tier weapon, rare ores, a spirit fruit which can extend one's longevity..."

Under the discerning gaze of his Eye of Insight, he swiftly identified the various items in the room.

As expected of the Spirit Emporium! Even to someone as picky as Zhang Xuan, he couldn't help but feel a little moved by some of the items in the room.

Suddenly, his gaze stopped on a certain artifact, and the edges of his lips crept up. Following which, he began walking toward a jade box on the shelf.

Gesturing to the jade box, Zhang Xuan asked, "What is this?"

"This is a grade-6 Bottleneck Surmounting Pill! A Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert can advance one's cultivation stage by consuming it, and there are no prerequisites to it. On top of that, it was forged by Vice School Head Luo of the Apothecary School personally, making it extremely valuable!" the attendant said.

"Grade-6 Bottleneck Surmounting Pill?"

The higher one's cultivation, the more difficult it would be to advance it. It was truly incredible for a pill to be able to raise a Chrysalis realm expert's cultivation by a single stage without any prerequisites to it. It was difficult to imagine the value of the pill.

"Let me take a look," Zhang Xuan said.

"Ordinarily, we wouldn't allow anyone to touch it, but since you are the one who wishes to look at it, I'll bring it to you..." Knowing

that the man standing before him was a big fish, the attendant agreed with a smile.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

The attendant stepped forward, opened the protective casing, took the jade box from the shelves, and opened it gently.

Hong long!

A surge of pure spiritual energy gushed from the box, leaving one feeling refreshed throughout. It felt like, if one consumed the pill, one would surely make immense progress in one's cultivation.

Green mist drifted above the pill, and it felt as if it would morph into a dragon at any moment and escape.

Despite only being Formation-grade, perhaps due to the valuable medicinal herbs involved in the forging process, it was still pulsating with energy. Most likely, its price would be exorbitant as well.

"It's a good pill..."

"A grade-6 pill! Even if I wanted to buy it, I couldn't afford it at all!"

"Indeed, it's too expensive..."

The surge of spiritual energy from the opening of the jade box had caught the eyes of many in the area.

The guests who were browsing through the other artifacts shifted their attention to the source.

Seeing that the pill was catching many gazes, Zhang Xuan waved his hands and said, "Close the lid. This pill is not bad. How much does it cost? I'll take it!"

Hearing that the other party would take it, the attendant closed the lid swiftly and replied excitedly, "As this is a grade-6 pill forged by the vice head of the Apothecary School, using 81 different valuable herbs, it's inevitable that its price is higher than other

pills. If you want it, you can have it at a discounted price of two high-tier spirit stone!"

"Two high-tier spirit stone?"

"What kind of lousy price is that?"

"Wasn't it five thousand middle-tier spirit stones just a few days ago? When did the price inflate to two high-tier spirit stones?"

...

A huge commotion broke out in the area.

Most of those gathered were frequent guests of the Spirit Emporium, so they had a rough gauge of the prices of the items displayed here.

Even though the Bottleneck Surmounting Pill had reached grade-6, it was only at a low-tier. On top of that, the pill had barely achieved Formation. As such, it was only worth five thousand middle-tier spirit stones at most. To actually attempt to sell it for two high-tier spirit stones... That attendant must be out of his mind!

Just as everyone thought that Zhang Xuan would turn it down due to its exorbitant price, the other party glanced at the pill and said, "A grade-6 pill for two high-tier spirit stones, that isn't too expensive. I'll take it!"

"He's going buy it?"

Everyone was stunned. They had seen plenty of foolish men in their time, but never had they seen such a dimwit before!

Did price not matter to him when it came to buying items?

"That's great. I'll have it wrapped up for you right now..." Upon hearing that Zhang Xuan would buy it, the attendant leaped in joy. He hurriedly passed the jade box into Sun Qiang's hands.

However, at that moment, Zhang Xuan abruptly frowned in worry and asked, "Could the items you sell possibly be fakes?"

"Fakes? You sure are good at jesting!" the attendant swiftly replied.

"The items sold in our Spirit Emporium have undergone the appraisal of master appraisers, so it's impossible for there to be any fakes in here. If you were to find any fakes amidst our goods, our Spirit Emporium will refund you tenfold of the selling price!"

Chapter 753 These Are All Fakes!

"Tenfold the selling price? Is that for real?" Zhang Xuan asked worriedly, seemingly unconvinced by the attendant's words.

"Of course! Our Spirit Emporium prides itself on its credibility!" the attendant replied.

"I see... Since you are willing to go so far to guarantee your credibility, I'll trust you for now. I'll pick out a few more items first before paying for them together later on!" Hearing the other party's words, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Credibility? Sun Qiang's mouth twitched.

An organization that murders others to steal their possessions, what kind of credibility can it possibly have?

You've got to be kidding me!

The young master actually believes this kind of nonsense?

More importantly, regardless of whether the young master believes that or not, we don't have the money to pay for the items!

The high-tier spirit stone given to the attendant previously was the prize which the young master obtained back in the Master Teacher Tournament. With even that gone, they were completely broke. How could they possibly afford the Bottleneck Surmounting Pill now?

Hearing that Zhang Xuan was going to pick a few more items, the attendant nodded in excitement.

"That's fine, feel free to!"

Since the other party was willing to toss a high-tier spirit stone out so casually, it could only mean that he had no lack of money. Besides, even if he couldn't afford it then, with the security around the Spirit Emporium, he couldn't possibly take the items away with him as well.

The attendants in the Spirit Emporium were paid on commission depending on the amount of spirit stones they earned for the store.

As long as he could seal this deal, he could easily earn a sum greater than the sales commissions he had received over the last few years.

"Un." Nodding, Zhang Xuan walked around the shelves before him, and raising his fan, he pointed to one item after another. "This, this, this..."

Soon, he had already pointed out eight of the items.

Seeing Zhang Xuan pointing out so many items at once, the attendant's face slowly grew redder and redder.

The items placed on display here were the more valuable artifacts in the store, and every single one of them was worth a fortune. Perhaps, he might just be able to earn enough money for his entire life through this deal!

The attendant wasn't the only one who was reacting so intensely to Zhang Xuan's actions, the crowd in the surroundings had frozen in shock as well.

Buying a grade-6 low-tier pill with two high-tier spirit stones had already blown their minds, and yet that fellow was still going on a shopping spree. When did such an extravagant, rich man come to Hongyuan City?

"I'll immediately take those items down for you!" The attendant hurriedly took down the items pointed in agitation and began calculating the price.

"Leave those eight items aside, wrap the remaining items up for me!" Zhang Xuan waved his fan casually.

Putong!

The attendant's knees suddenly caved in at those words, and he nearly collapsed to the ground in astonishment.

The lower jaws of the crowd fell to the ground.

Even Sun Qiang nearly keeled over from those words.

He knew that he had often behaved brazenly due to the old master backing, but from the looks of it now, he couldn't even hold a candle to the young master!

To put aside the eight of the items and take everything else...

There were at least a hundred items on display here, and a large portion of them were weapons and armor, which were valued at several high-tier spirit stones at the very least! To take all of them at once...

That would at least cost a hundred high-tier spirit stones!

Could he definitely afford such a sum?

He did know that he'd be pummeled to death if he failed to fork out the money later on, right?

After a long moment, the attendant finally recovered sufficiently to ask hoarsely, "You want... everything else?"

He was still thinking a while ago that, with the commission from those eight items, he could easily live extravagantly for the rest of his life, but the other party was actually intending to take everything else except for those eight! He had truly stumbled upon the God of Fortune this time around! As long as he sealed this deal, he would have sufficient money to feed ten generations of his descendants!

"That's right. Wrap them up for me!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands arrogantly.

"Yes!"

The attendant pinched himself hard, and it was only upon feeling the sharp pain that he finally believed he wasn't dreaming. He hurriedly gathered all of the items together and began calculating the price.

"All in all, there are 93 items, and the total sum is... 237 high-tier spirit stones!" the attendant said with a quivering voice.

"237 high-tier spirit stones? That isn't too expensive!" Zhang Xuan nodded before gesturing to Sun Qiang, "Butler, pay him!"

Pay him? Sun Qiang froze.

You are asking me to pay him? But I don't even have a single high-tier spirit stone on me, what am I supposed to pay him with?

Just as Sun Qiang was at a loss for what to do, Zhang Xuan abruptly raised his hand, seemingly stopping Sun Qiang from making a move, before gazing at the pile of items warily. "Wait a moment! Are you certain that every single item here is authentic, and if I find any fakes, you will refund me tenfold?"

"Of course! All of the items here were personally verified by a 6-star appraiser, Master Mo Fei! There is definitely no problem with their quality!" The attendant swiftly reassured Zhang Xuan.

"I trust you, but I want to be absolutely sure that they are all authentic. How about you invite Master Mo Fei here to appraise them right before me? Only then can I dispel my doubts and buy these items!" Zhang Xuan said.

"This..."

The attendant hesitated for a moment before nodding. "Alright then. Please wait here for a moment, I will invite Master Mo Fei over this instant!"

After which, he swiftly rushed off.

"Well, given the sheer volume of items he is buying, it's natural that he would want them reappraised to ensure that they are authentic!"

"That's true. However, I do know of that Master Mo Fei, and while he's a 6-star appraiser, he is living off the Spirit Emporium's payroll. Are his words really trustworthy?"

"Even if he were to spout nonsense, outsiders like us would be none the wiser!"

"In any case, it seems like that fellow has no lack of money. He is just probably asking for a reappraisal to calm his mind..."

...

Taking the scene in sight, the crowd muttered among themselves.

Typically speaking, most artifact dealers would seek a third party to appraise their works so as to ensure reliability. However, Appraiser Mo Fei was an employee of the Spirit Emporium, and that cast doubt on his reliability.

As such, that young man was probably going to be hoodwinked.

Amidst the muttering, the attendant finally returned with a potbellied old man behind him.

The old man harrumphed with his chin tilted up proudly.

"Who wants their item appraised?"

Appraisers were the most sought-after occupation in the market. Even the head of the Spirit Emporium had to treat him with respect.

"Me!" Zhang Xuan folded his fan and pointed it at the stack of items on the table. "I want to buy these items, so I need you to appraise them for me!"

Mo Fei glanced at the items on the table, and his eyebrows shot up.

"I have already appraised every single one of these items, and there is no doubt about their authenticity. Why? Are you doubting my judgement as a 6-star appraiser?"

"You have appraised everything here?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"That's right. What are you waiting for? Bring the appraisal

certificates over!" Mo Fei waved his hands impatiently.

The attendant hurried off to the counter, and after some fumbling, he returned with a pile of papers on hand.

These were the appraisal certificates of every single item on the table, and they were all signed off by Mo Fei.

"I see that there are appraisal certificates for them, good..."

Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief as he took the appraisal certificates from the attendant and began browsing through them carefully. With a peculiar smile, he asked, "I heard that the Spirit Emporium refunds tenfold of the selling price should any items be proven to be a fake, may I confirm if that's true?"

"Of course!" Mo Fei nodded proudly.

As a 6-star appraiser, he was confident in his appraisals.

"Alright then, I would like to turn your attention to this pill first then..." With a light wave of his hand, the jade box containing the grade-6 pill flew into his hand.

"Why? Are you saying that there's a problem with the Bottleneck Surmounting Pill?" Mo Fei frowned.

"It is written on the appraisal certificate that the vice head of the Apothecary School used 81 different types of medicinal herbs to create this pill which can allow any Chrysalis realm expert to raise their cultivation by a stage. Is that true?"

"Of course!" Mo Fei flung his sleeves proudly.

"While this is indeed a grade-6 pill, it wasn't forged by the vice head of the Apothecary School. Furthermore, it was forged using on 72 different types of medicinal herbs. Judging by the slight yellow hue of the pill, it seems like the blood essence of a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Golden Grassland Antelope. The slightly incongruous fragrance it exudes hints at the addition of a Sicklepod Flower..."

Opening the box, Zhang Xuan slowly analyzed it bit by bit.

In a single breath, he pointed out the various key anomalies regarding the pill.

With every single point that he mentioned, Mo Fei's face turned a shade paler.

As a 6-star appraiser, he could tell that the other party's judgement was spot-on.

It was as if the other party was present at the forging process! To be able to deduce all of this in just a short moment, it could only mean to say that the other party's appraising ability was above his!

"So what if you can list all of the ingredients used in its forging? There are many variations to the Bottleneck Surmounting Pill in the market. As long as it can advance one's cultivation, it can't be considered a fake!" Seeing the young man before him go on and on, Mo Fei finally snapped.

"Advance one's cultivation?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "After all I have said, you still don't understand? The blood essence of the Golden Grassland Antelope is indeed extremely beneficial to a cultivator, but that is only if it hasn't been mixed with Sicklepod Flower!

"Sicklepod Flower, otherwise known as the Flower of Eternal Rest, has to be mediated using the Heptad Verdant Grass. However, the apothecary who forged this pill has failed to do so... In other words, not only will this pill not advance one's cultivation, the one who consumes it will even die of poisoning!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Die of poisoning?"

"Is that true?"

"If that's the case, that would mean that not only is this pill a fake, it is even a weapon of murder..."

Hearing those words, everyone leaped in shock.

The reason a cultivator would spend their fortune on purchasing a pill was so they could achieve a breakthrough in their cultivation.

Yet, not only would they not be able to achieve a breakthrough with this pill, it would even poison them to death! To part with their life savings just to be poisoned, that would be a true tragedy!

"Nonsense! This pill is rich in spiritual energy, how could it be poisonous?" Mo Fei's eyebrows shot up.

"You don't believe me? Since that's case... bring a Pill Sample Beast over then! We will know the answer with a quick test!" Zhang Xuan replied impassively.

"Fine!" Mo Fei harrumphed.

Soon, a Pill Sample Beast was brought over.

Pill Sample Beasts possessed a constitution similar to humans, making them an ideal subject to test for the effect a pill would have on humans.

"You should do it yourself lest you say that I tampered with the Pill Sample Beast or the Bottleneck Surmounting Pill!" Zhang Xuan passed the jade box over.

"Humph!"

With a cold harrumph, Mo Fei rubbed a bit of medicinal powder off the pill and fed it to the Pill Sample Beast.

Pill Sample Beasts were extremely sensitive to poison; thus, a small portion was more than enough for the test. Besides, if he were to take too much, the Pill Sample Beast might end up dying from the excessive influx of spiritual energy from the pill.

Gugugugu!

As soon as the Pill Sample Beast ate the powder, its aura suddenly intensified, growing stronger swiftly.

"Its cultivation is rising; this is clearly the effect of a normal Bottleneck Surmounting Pill. What else do you have to say for yourself?" Mo Fei turned around and sneered at Zhang Xuan for his ignorance.

However, at that moment, the Pill Sample Beast's surging aura abruptly came to a halt, and its body began to convulse.

Pu!

A mouthful of pitch-black blood spurted from its mouth, and the small white beast abruptly froze before collapsing to the ground.

Chapter 754 These Are All Fakes! (2)

"What?"

"It's dead?"

"Could it be that... the pill isn't a Bottleneck Surmounting Pill but poison?"

"That is way too scary! Imagine spending two high-tier spirit stones just to buy lethal poison home!"

"The Spirit Emporium has truly gone too far this time around! Is this how it conducts business?"

...

Seeing the Pill Sample Beast breathing its last, a huge uproar broke out amidst the crowd.

They couldn't help but imagine what would have happened if they'd purchased the pill. They would have been filled with expectations for the future when they purchased the pill, only to end up dead due to it. The huge contrast between their expectations and reality was something that made the situation even more unacceptable.

That Mo Fei had just confidently declared that the Bottleneck Surmounting Pill was authentic a moment ago, but a minute later, a Pill Sample Beast was poisoned to death by it... With such a precedent, how could they possibly ever dare to buy any pills from the Spirit Emporium in the future?

"This..." Mo Fei also froze on the spot.

In truth, he had carefully calculated the amount of powder to feed the Pill Sample Beast. He was certain that it shouldn't have been sufficient to kill it with the dose he had rubbed off.

Yet, it still ended up collapsing in the end... Could the other party be speaking the truth? This pill was not a Bottleneck Surmounting

Pill but a failed product turned into poison?

"So, is this considered to be a fake?" Zhang Xuan asked with a cold smile.

"This... Fine! I admit that my judgement was off for this pill!" With the Pill Sample Beast poisoned to death, there was no way he could deny this anymore.

"Hah, you are saying that your judgement was off for only this pill? Let me tell you, this pill isn't the only thing you are wrong about!" Zhang Xuan casually waved his hand, and the Bronze Gong which he had picked out first flew into his hand.

"According to what you have written in the appraisal certificate, this item was forged by a 6-star blacksmith, and it possesses the ability to wipe out a soul. Even a soul oracle would be utterly destroyed by a single knock on the gong!"

"Indeed. Even though the Bronze Gong is only a Spirit intermediate-tier weapon, it has a long history behind it. The lightning energy that has gathered within it over time grants it sufficient power to destroy even a soul oracle!" Mo Fei declared proudly.

He had studied the Bronze Gong carefully over a long period of time, so he was confident that there wasn't any mistake in its appraisal.

"Since you are so confident, why don't we give it a try?" Zhang Xuan turned to the attendant standing by the side and said, "You are a Consonant Spirit realm cultivator, so you should have already started cultivating your soul as well. If this weapon has the ability to destroy a soul, you should feel a sharp pain in your soul when used against you."

At which, he turned to Mo Fei and asked, "Do you have any disagreements with this test?"

While the effects of the Bronze Gong were discounted against

most cultivators as their souls would be protected by their physical body, they would still be more or less affected by it.

Furthermore, Consonant Spirit realm experts had barely started cultivating their soul, making them even more prone to any attacks on their soul.

"I have no objections to it!" Mo Fei replied.

The crowd who were watching the commotion also nodded in agreement.

Soul oracles had already disappeared in the annals of history, so it was impossible to test the Bronze Gong on them anymore. However, it should work fine against a Consonant Spirit realm expert as well.

"I will let you do it..." With the edges of his lips curled up, Zhang Xuan passed the Bronze Gong to Mo Fei.

Mo Fei took the Bronze Gong over impatiently, and gathering his zhenqi, he struck it powerfully toward the attendant.

However, the attendant remained completely unfazed by the attack. In other words, the Bronze Gong didn't have any effect on the soul!

"H-how is this possible?" Mo Fei's face turned ghastly pale.

Back then, he had even experimented with the Bronze Gong. The lightning energy it harnessed was extremely effective on souls, capable of even annihilating a soul oracle!

Why did its effects vanish all of a sudden?

Without that, this would only be an ordinary Bronze Gong, worth nothing at all!

"The Bronze Gong's effect of dealing with souls can only be dispelled by a soul oracle, but the heritage of the soul oracles has already vanished countless years ago. Thus, it is impossible for anyone to have tampered with it... Have I really appraised it

wrongly?" Mo Fei muttered as cold sweat trickled down his back.

Souls were an extremely complex subject, and the only occupation to have truly uncovered their secrets were the soul oracles. They were the only ones who could dispel the effects on the Bronze Gong. No one else, not even a Saint realm cultivator, could do the same.

However, the soul oracles had already been eradicated by the Master Teacher Pavilion, so it was impossible for anyone to dispel the effects of the Bronze Gong. Since the effect clearly wasn't there, could his appraisal have been wrong from the very start?

It was one thing for him to have made a mistake, but to make two of them consecutively... He was already beginning to doubt his life.

Appraisers could only make three errors throughout their entire career, and beyond that, they would be stripped of their license. Was his career going to end here?

Ignoring Mo Fei's slump, Zhang Xuan waved his hands, and a pill cauldron flew in front of him.

"Moving on, let's talk about this copper cauldron. You have identified it to be a Nine Symphony Cauldron created by a 6-star blacksmith on the appraisal certificate. It is capable of producing Nine Symphony Flames which allows the heat to be distributed more equally throughout the cauldron, thus making it easier to fuse the medicinal herbs together. However, you also stated that it is extremely difficult to tame its spirit and make it acknowledge one as its master... May I confirm that what I have just said is true?"

This was also another artifact in the Spirit Emporium, and it had an appraisal certificate as well.

"Yes..." Mo Fei nodded.

This time, however, his tone wasn't as confident as before.

"Even though the Nine Symphony Cauldron increases the

chances of successfully forging a pill, it is extremely difficult to make its spirit submit. This is a fact that all appraisers know, so there can't be any mistake on that." Mo Fei gritted his teeth.

"This isn't the Nine Symphony Cauldron, and it doesn't have such a troublesome spirit as well. It won't even take me a minute to make it submit to me!" Zhang Xuan said calmly.

"You will make it submit in less than a minute? How can that be? If you can do so, I will admit that I am mistaken, and that it is a fake!" Mo Fei sneered coldly.

You must be joking! It is a well-known fact that it is difficult to make the spirit of a Nine Symphony Cauldron submit to one. To make it submit to you in less than a minute?

You're dreaming!

Not even a Saint realm expert could do that!

"You are the one who said those words!"

With a chuckle, Zhang Xuan walked up to the cauldron and slapped it casually. "Acknowledge me as your master!"

Weng!

The next moment, a resounding buzz sounded from the cauldron, as if it was shaking in excitement from meeting its master.

"What?" Mo Fei's body trembled uncontrollably, and he nearly spurted blood.

That was clearly the sound of the cauldron acknowledging its master, of that there was no mistake!

Due to the unique method in forging a Nine Symphony Cauldron, its spirit was disjointed, making it extremely difficult to win its loyalty. There were many who had spent decades on it, only to fail eventually. Yet, this cauldron actually acknowledged that young man in less than half a minute... Was he truly mistaken once more?

The cauldron was a fake as well?

Just what was going on?

"These Lilac Sandalwood Beads can indeed keep one's mind composed when worn, but unfortunately, it is cursed. As a result, not only will it not keep one calm, it might even cause one to go berserk!"

"In your analysis, you said that this bottle of medicinal solution is made using dozens of different poisons, and it is extremely useful for tempering one's body. However, I have just taken a look, and the poison within hasn't been neutralized yet. Anyone who consumes it will die without fail!"

"You claimed that this ore can raise the grade of a weapon up a notch by fusing it in. However, it is impossible to melt this ore in the first place, so how could one possibly combine it within a weapon?"

"This..."

"..."

After proving the issues in the appraisal of the first three items, Zhang Xuan moved on to point out the problems of the other items the attendant had taken out. He would pick up every single item and pat off the dust on them before explaining what was wrong with them.

With every problem he explained, Mo Fei's face would turn a shade darker.

By the time Zhang Xuan was done pointing out the errors in everything, Mo Fei seemed as if he was already standing on the threshold of insanity.

He had the attendants test the other items as well, and some of them he even did it himself, but the conclusions were still the same.

He was certain that the items here weren't like that when he was appraising them, why did all of them change all of a sudden?

This was exceptionally so for the weapons he had checked. Not only were the spirits within them difficult to tame, they were aggressive even! If a cultivator were to buy one of them, there was no guarantee that he wouldn't be killed by his sword in his sleep!

"There are actually so many fakes here?"

"I have always trusted the products of the Spirit Emporium, but to think that they were actually such a dishonest business!"

"How can I still trust them not to lie to me in the future?"

"It seems like I can't buy anything from here anymore. The items may be cheap, but if saving that bit of money could cost my life, I would rather not take that risk..."

...

Watching the events unfold, the crowd in the area felt their hearts turning cold.

The two main reasons they frequented the Spirit Emporium despite the unlawful means they use to obtain their items were due to the relatively lower prices of their goods and the guarantee on its quality.

But even with the relatively lower price, if all they were going to receive was a fake, what was the point?

Putting everything aside, if they had bought that Bottleneck Surmounting Pill, not only would they be cheated of their money, they might even lose their life... Who in their right minds would pay just to have themselves killed?

"... So, this is a fake as well. All in all, everything here is a fake!"

Zhang Xuan glanced at the attendants and Mo Fei calmly and said, "All in all, you charged me 237 high-tier spirit stones for these items. Given your refund policy... I believe that you owe me 2370

high-tier spirit stones!"

"2370 high-tier spirit stones?"

"They said earlier that they would pay tenfold the selling price should an item be deemed to be a fake. Now that everything has been proven to be fakes, it is only right for the Spirit Emporium to compensate him!"

"This is insane... Even if the Spirit Emporium were to sell off its assets, it couldn't possibly afford that!"

"Well, who asked them to brag about their refund policy? Not to mention, they even dared to put up so many fake goods on top of that. They had it coming..."

...

Hearing the young man's words, everyone leaped in shock.

Putting aside the Spirit Emporium, it was questionable whether even the royal family had 2370 high-tier spirit stones in its treasury!

But considering how it was exposed before so many people, if it were to default on its payment, its reputation would be completely ruined. If so, they need not dream of operating in Hongyuan City anymore.

"Amazing..." Sun Qiang's eyes were glowing in respect.

He had been wondering how the young master would exact his vengeance, but upon seeing this sight, he finally realized how fearsome the young master was!

If they had walked into the store and threatened the Spirit Emporium with violence, the Spirit Emporium would have held the moral high ground, and no one could have said anything no matter how the Spirit Emporium dealt with them. However, the young master challenged them through legitimate means, cornering them with the rules they had set for themselves...

Let's see how you will deal with that!

Even if you go to the Master Teacher Pavilion to mediate in this matter, it is clear that you are in the wrong!

It was impossible for the Spirit Emporium to pay the 2370 high-tier spirit stones compensation. Even if it could, it would be severely crippled financially. With its reputation in shambles, it would never recover from this blow.

With so many fakes in the store, who would dare to buy from them in the future?

"W-who in the world are you? What do you intend to do?"

It wasn't too difficult to see through all of this. At this point, the attendant was already on the verge of tears.

He'd thought that he had finally met his God of Fortune, and he was looking forward to a life of extravagance. Who could have known that it was a God of Misfortune instead? He might very well lose his job due to this!

"Who am I? I am just a customer in your store. Don't you think that it's only right for you to pay after trying to sell me so many fakes?"

Zhang Xuan smiled.

Chapter 755 Where Are My Artifacts

"I..."

The attendant's body trembled.

In the many years the Spirit Emporium had existed, there had never been a single person who had reported it for selling fake goods. In just a single day, this man actually dug up so many fake goods from their shelves...

He'd thought that the other party was just a profligate scion who had too much money to spare, but he would be a fool if he still couldn't tell that it was an act at this point. That fellow was clearly here to cause trouble!

"Call the boss here, fast! He's the only one who can resolve this matter at this point..." Mo Fei urged. It seemed as if he had aged decades over the last few minutes.

As an appraiser, he could tell that there was no mistake in the other party's appraisals.

At this point, it was already an established fact at this point that they did attempt to defraud their buyers.

In other words, as long as the other party demanded compensation, there was nothing they could do about it. The problem was already beyond their scope!

"Yes!" The attendant nodded and quickly rushed off.

Soon, a cold-faced middle-aged man strode into the room.

He was extremely tall with a slightly plump stature. The sharp glint in his eyes seemed to suggest that he was a person who would resort to unscrupulous means to get what he wanted.

His aura was obscure, but it felt transcendent. Most likely, he was at least a Nascent Saint!

Indeed, if not for the backing of such an expert, considering the

vile deeds that the Spirit Emporium committed in the shadows, it would have long been rooted from Hongyuan City.

The middle-aged man walked up to Zhang Xuan and asked with narrowed eyes, "Are you the one who said that these items are fakes?"

On the way here, he had already heard the full story from the attendant.

Ignoring the other party's words, Zhang Xuan waved his hands and said, "Hurry up and decide on how you will compensate me. Otherwise, trust me when I say that it won't take long for the entire Hongyuan City to learn about this!"

"You!"

Clenching his fists tightly, the hint of killing intent flashed across the dark eyes of the Spirit Emporium's boss.

All along, they had been the ones preying on others. To think that a day would come when someone would be so arrogant as to try to prey on them!

The boss of the Spirit Emporium harrumphed.

"This friend over here, I don't know who you are or where you come from, but allow me give you a word of advice: don't burn your bridges. Otherwise, who knows when it might come back to bite you!"

"Are you threatening me?" Zhang Xuan chuckled lightly in response. "A refund tenfold of the selling price, that is the policy your Spirit Emporium came up by yourself. Are you going to silence me now that a fake has really appeared in your store?"

"This isn't a threat, just a friendly reminder to you. The path of a cultivator isn't an easy one; I fear for your safety!" Seeing the other party's fearless attitude, the boss of the Spirit Emporium was on the verge of exploding, but there was nothing he could do.

If he were to make a move on the other party here, the reputation of their Spirit Emporium which he had built painstakingly over the years would be truly ruined.

The boss glanced at Mo Fei and sent a telepathic message to him.

"Are those items really fakes?"

"I am not too sure either, but... when I reappraised the items he picked out, they were completely different from before... Even if I say that they aren't fakes, no one will believe me..." Mo Fei said.

Even if they weren't fakes, the other party had already pointed out the various flaws in them clearly. As such, who would still want to buy them?

Take for example the valuable Spirit high-tier armor which allowed its wearer to withstand attacks from a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert amidst the stack of items the other party had picked out. Its effects were incredible, but that fellow had already revealed its flaws and how one could overcome it... If so, what was the point of purchasing the armor?

In other words, even if the items were authentic, they were already useless at this point. That would make them as good as fakes.

"Damn it!" Hearing Mo Fei admit to the matter, the face of the boss turned scarily livid.

"Are you done with the negotiations yet? If you are, pay up. These items are worth 237 high-tier spirit stones, and with your tenfold refund policy, you owe me a total of 2370 high-tier spirit stones. Alright, I will give you a little bit of a discount out of the kindness of my heart. 2000 high-tier spirit stones, and I will drop this matter. Otherwise... for defrauding your customers and attempting to scam a master teacher, I will report this matter to the Master Teacher Pavilion to have them to judge this case!" Zhang Xuan said calmly.

"You are a master teacher?" The boss narrowed his eyes.

Typically speaking, as long as one didn't commit any atrocities against humanity, the Master Teacher Pavilion would not interfere in most matters. However, if a master teacher was involved in the case, there was a good chance that it would intervene.

This was a privilege the Master Teacher Pavilion granted its members.

Once the Master Teacher Pavilion intervened in the matter, the various shady things they had done might be pulled to the surface as well, and the entire Spirit Emporium could very well be destroyed due to that.

Even though there were quite a few people who knew of the Spirit Emporium's doings in the shadows, they had no evidence, and the Spirit Emporium had made sure to deal with them accordingly, be it bribery or silencing them.

However, considering the means of the Master Teacher Pavilion, it wouldn't be too difficult for them to get to the bottom of the matter.

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan replied.

After recovering from the shock, a thought flashed across the boss's mind, and he harrumphed.

"Even if you are a master teacher, considering your young age, you should be a student of the Master Teacher Academy, right?"

"Considering how many students there are in the Master Teacher Academy, I doubt that anyone will know if one or two of them go missing!"

The Master Teacher Academy was a place to nurture budding master teachers, and it was impossible to do so while keeping the students in a safe environment. Thus, it wasn't rare for the academy to dispatch its students on dangerous missions, and deaths weren't infrequent.

"It's indeed nothing much for a student or two of the academy to disappear, but I'm afraid that School Head Mo of the Beast Tamer School and School Head Zhao of the Blacksmith School will disagree with your words!"

Chuckling lightly, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out the two tokens given to him.

Since they were already in his possession, it should be fine for him to make use of their authority.

Mo Fei's body shuddered upon seeing the tokens, and he hurriedly sent a telepathic message to the boss.

"Those are indeed the personal tokens of School Head Mo and School Head Zhao... They are real!"

School Head Zhao and School Head Mo were part of the Ten Great Master Teachers, and they were famous figures even amongst the many Tier-1 Empires. Considering that they had given their personal tokens to the young man standing before them... their relationship was anything but ordinary.

"They are real?"

The boss had thought that he was only dealing with an ordinary student, so the matter shouldn't have been too difficult to resolve. But who could have thought that the fellow would carry two of the school heads' personal tokens on him?

"Alright, I will give you a tea's time to think over your options. If you refuse to pay, I will head to the Master Teacher Pavilion. It just happens that I have quite a close relationship with Pavilion Master Mo, so I believe that he will happily seek justice for me!" Zhang Xuan said as he stretched his back lazily.

Since the Spirit Emporium dared to threaten those around him, it should be prepared to face his wrath.

You want to be domineering?

Sure, let me crush you with my identity as a master teacher then! Let's see which of us is more domineering!

The face of the boss reddened in rage, but he dared not to vent his anger.

A tea's time...

On the other hand, the attendant rushed forward and reported something to him via telepathy.

Hearing the attendant's words, the boss heaved a sigh of relief before turning to Zhang Xuan. "There's no need to wait a tea's time, we will pay!"

"For real?"

"The Spirit Emporium is going to pay?"

"But that is 2000 high-tier spirit stones! Putting aside the Spirit Emporium, is there even so much money in Hongyuan Empire?"

...

Seeing the boss of the Spirit Emporium abruptly changing his mind, choosing to pay the sum, everyone was taken aback.

Even Zhang Xuan himself was a little taken aback by the turn of events.

He had prepared a hand in case the other party refused to pay, but never had he imagined that the other party would agree to it instead.

"You paid a high-tier spirit stone to purchase the Bronze Gong earlier. Even though you did say that you intended to buy the other items, you haven't paid for them yet... In other words, we have only sold you a single item so far. With our refund policy, we will repay you ten high-tier spirit stones!"

The boss waved his hands and instructed, "Hurry up and bring ten high-tier spirit stones over!"

"Yes!" The attendant hurriedly nodded before leaving the room. Soon, he returned with ten gleaming high-tier spirit stones in hand and passed them over to Sun Qiang.

"This..." Sun Qiang was a little dazed, unable to catch up with the happenings. He wasn't certain whether he should accept it or not.

While the young master had pointed out many items that he wanted to buy, he hadn't paid for them. All along, he had only passed a high-tier spirit stone to the attendant.

Using this loophole, the Spirit Emporium regarded that as the only transaction conducted and refunded him ten high-tier spirit stones. While that was a substantial sum as well, it was at least a cost the Spirit Emporium could afford to bear.

Regardless from which angle one looked at this matter from, the other party's response was also in line with the rules.

"Young Master..."

Unsure of what to do, Sun Qiang turned to Zhang Xuan, only to see latter smiling calmly. "Are you sure that's how you want to play the game?"

"This master teacher over here, I am not sure what you are trying to say. Our Spirit Emporium prides itself on its honor. Since you paid us a high-tier spirit stone, going by our refund policy, we have already compensated you with ten. Even if you were to bring this up in the Master Teacher Pavilion, I believe that there is nothing Pavilion Master Mo could say about this." The boss of the Spirit Emporium smiled, but his eyes remained as cold as ever.

"On the other hand, you, as a master teacher, despite not buying anything at all, attempted to hoodwink us out of 2000 high-tier spirit stones. Surely this would be bad for your reputation if word were to spread?"

After hearing from the attendant that the fellow had only paid a single high-tier spirit stone, he immediately thought of a

countermeasure.

A transaction can only be considered to have occurred when the goods and money have been exchanged. Even if the items we have here are fakes, you haven't paid yet, so they still belong to the Spirit Emporium. Naturally, we don't have to refund you for them.

"I see. Since that is the case..." Zhang Xuan glanced at the boss of the Spirit Emporium impassively and said, "You have taken my artifacts and placed them on sale for so long, but you still haven't sold them yet. It shouldn't be too much for me to take them away with me now, right?"

"Artifacts? When did we take your artifacts and place them on sale?" The boss of the Spirit Emporium was momentarily stunned by the ridiculous words spouted by the young man before him.

This is the first time I've met you, when did I take your artifacts?

Even if you want to frame me, surely you can do better than that?

"You are denying it?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "All artifacts have their own spirit, and it is impossible to win the loyalty of the spirit without spending substantial time with them. This is common knowledge amongst all cultivators, so I believe that you, the boss of the Spirit Emporium, shouldn't be unfamiliar with it either."

The boss couldn't understand what the young man was driving at, but he nodded in response.

It wasn't easy to make the spirit of an artifact submit to one. There were even a few who were unable to get the spirit of their artifact to acknowledge them as its master even after years of effort.

"That makes things simple then... Alright, I think I don't have to explain that only my own artifacts will listen to my command, that should be more than obvious to all of us here."

With an upright posture reminiscent of a taut spear piercing

through the heavens, Zhang Xuan abruptly bellowed with a resounding voice, "What are you all waiting for? Pay respect to your master!"

Huala!

As soon as those words were uttered, all of the artifacts in the room flew into the sky and gathered around Zhang Xuan.

Chapter 756 All Mine!

"This is the response of artifacts who have acknowledged a cultivator as their master!"

"In the end, all of these artifacts actually belong to him? No wonder he knows them so well..."

"Is he the true owner of the Spirit Emporium? These are the most valuable artifacts here! If all of these are his, this would mean that the Spirit Emporium is pretty much emptied out!"

...

Seeing the artifacts flying from their places, everyone was stunned.

All of the artifacts which the young man had appraised before, be they swords, chains, armors, cauldrons... each and every one of them was floating around him, humming in excitement. It was as if they had finally met with their master after great difficulty, and they were unwilling to part with him!

All of the most valuable artifacts in the Spirit Emporium were in there. If all of those artifacts belonged to the young man before them... this renowned 'treasure vault' of Hongyuan City would be emptied out!

Those artifacts made up seventy to eighty percent of the total asset of the Spirit Emporium.

Surely the young man, and not the middle-aged man over there, was the true boss of the Spirit Emporium...

Sun Qiang's lips twitched.

The young master... sure is vicious!

He knew of the young master's ability to make artifacts acknowledge him swiftly. Back when he was appraising the artifacts, he'd touched every single one of them while explaining

their properties. It was probably then that he'd made them submit to him.

From the very start, there were only two options for the Spirit Emporium. They could either obediently pay up or have their assets emptied out!

With all the weapons acknowledging the young master, even if he were to claim that everything was stolen from him, there would be no one who would doubt his words!

"Y-you..." As expected, upon seeing all of the weapons obeying the words of the young man, the boss of the Spirit Emporium nearly fainted.

He'd paid a hefty price in order to procure those weapons, and he was certain that they were unowned when he obtained them. Why did all of them acknowledge that fellow as their master?

Gaining the acknowledgement of an artifact was an extremely troublesome matter. Without sufficient time, it was impossible to succeed. For all of them to acknowledge him as their master, it could only mean one thing...

In the very first place, all of these weapons belonged to him!

He felt fresh blood welling up in his throat, threatening to spill forth at any moment.

In order to buy these weapons, the Spirit Emporium had even incurred a heavy debt. If everything were to be taken away by the other party, the business empire which he had built painstakingly over the course of many years would collapse in an instant.

Not only so, he would even fall into heavy debt as well.

"As everyone can see, these artifacts belong to me. However, the Spirit Emporium stole them from me, and left with no choice, I could only resort to such a course of action. All I want now is to bring my artifacts away with me," Zhang Xuan said righteously.

"Those artifacts belong to you, and you want to take them away? Pu!" Reaching the limit of his tolerance, the head of the Spirit Emporium spurted a mouthful of blood.

Like heck they are yours, I bought them with a huge sum of money... They are mine!

You are clearly a troublemaker wreaking havoc in my territory. I have already given you ten high-tier spirit stones, what else do you want?

Do you really intend to take my entire fortune away with you?

How the hell have I offended you that you must push me over the cliff?

"Since these artifacts are mine, I will be taking them back now. Sun Qiang, let's go!"

Just as the boss of the Spirit Emporium was overwhelmed with indignation, the young man before him swiftly stored all of the flying artifacts in his storage ring and turned around to leave.

"You... Hold it right there!"

Knowing that everything would be over if he allowed the young man to leave, the head of the Spirit Emporium roared furiously. The aura of a Saint surged from his body, ready to unleash a fatal strike on the young man before him at any moment.

Zhang Xuan turned around and faced the boss fearlessly.

"Why? Are you going to resort to violence now? You should know the consequences of snatching a master teacher's possession!"

If the Master Teacher Pavilion were to learn that the boss of the Spirit Emporium had stolen a master teacher's possession before so many people, he would be severely dealt with.

Even if he was a Saint, he could potentially stand to have his cultivation crippled or even face death!

"I..." A savage expression surfaced on the boss of the Spirit

Emporium. "I won't snatch the artifacts through violence, but unless you hand them over, don't even dream about stepping out of this building! Men!"

Huala!

The patrol squads swiftly rushed forward and block all of the exits. Wielding a weapon each in their hands, they glared at Zhang Xuan ferociously, as if they would tear him apart if he dared approach them.

On the other hand, the crowd in the area who were dragged into this matter turned pale in fright, and their bodies trembled uncontrollably.

If they had known this would happen, they would never have stayed on to watch the commotion. Now, they were doomed...

"To think that the boss of the Spirit Emporium would be so underhanded as to bully a junior..."

Despite the impending battle that was about to fall upon him, Zhang Xuan didn't seem panicked in the least. Instead, he sighed deeply. "To tell you the truth, I was still contemplating whether I should give you a chance and leave some of the artifacts behind. However, since you are so shameless, don't blame me for getting nasty then!"

Disappointment was reflected in Zhang Xuan's eyes. Shaking his head, he walked calmly over to the shelves, opened the casing, and tapped on the metal hammer within it twice.

"This is mine!"

Following which, he walked over to another artifact and tapped on it as well. "This is mine too!"

"Mine as well..."

"Still mine..."

"All mine..."

Soon, he tapped the eight remaining items in the room.

The boss of the Spirit Emporium was still wondering what that fellow was up to when all of the artifacts suddenly hummed excitedly, acknowledging Zhang Xuan as their master. Every single one of them flew into the air and floated right by the young man's side.

"The heck..." The boss was on the verge of insanity.

That fellow was not planning to take away most of the Spirit Emporium's asset; he was planning on taking away all of its assets!

If the other party was allowed to do as he pleased, everything in the Spirit Emporium would be his in less than five minutes!

Screw him!

"Stop him!" the boss bellowed.

Hong long!

Hearing the boss's command, the guards rushed at Zhang Xuan to stop him, but the next instant, countless artifacts abruptly appeared and struck them.

The artifacts were protecting their master!

If those guards wanted to get to Zhang Xuan, they would have to get past the artifacts first.

Even though the offensive capabilities of the artifacts weren't too strong as there was no one driving them, they still managed to stall the guards. These artifacts were the possessions of the Spirit Emporium, so they didn't dare to strike too hard for fear of damaging any of them.

"Boss..." the head of the guards called out.

"All of you, scram!" Reaching the limits of his tolerance, the boss roared.

The power of a Saint burst from his body, and under the

suppression of the violent aura, the floating artifacts fell to the ground powerless with a jolt.

Clang clang clang clang clang!

"What are you doing? You know that you have to pay for damaging my artifacts, right?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"Pay? Pay your head!"

Bursting with fury, the boss could maintain his composure no longer and began hurling curses.

All of those items were my precious artifacts, but you used some kind of sorcery to make them submit to you... You were the one who stole my treasures, and you still want me to pay you? How can there be such a shameless person in the world?

"Today, you need not try to leave!"

The more he thought about it, the more furious he felt. Thus, he stomped his feet.

Hong long!

The Spirit Emporium began to tremor, and all of the doors slammed shut. Two towering walls rose from the ground, covering all of the shelves where the artifacts were supposed to be placed.

"It's a mechanism!"

"I have long heard that the boss of the Spirit Emporium paid a heavy price in order to build this building, inviting forty students of the Celestial Designer School to work day and night for half a year to rush this out... I thought that those were just rumors, but it was actually true!"

"Now that the Spirit Emporium has been locked down, how are we supposed to leave?"

"I have no idea either... Let's just hope that we won't be implicated in this matter!"

"I doubt so... That young man is a master teacher, so if the boss were to kill him, we would be eyewitnesses to the deed..."

...

Seeing the boss fly into a rage and activate the mechanism of the Spirit Emporium to shut all of the exits, preventing anyone from entering or leaving, the crowd that was trapped inside stared at one another with faces pale with fright.

If the boss were to really kill that master teacher, they, as eyewitnesses, surely wouldn't fare any better either!

After all, if the matter were to be leaked to the Master Teacher Pavilion, the boss would be pursued by them to the ends of the world.

Standing beside Zhang Xuan, Sun Qiang's face paled as well.

The young master's cultivation was only at the Cosmos Bridge realm, but the enemy he was facing was a Saint... This time, they were really in deep trouble...

Zhang Xuan had never told anyone about the Otherworldly Demon puppets or Vicious, so Sun Qiang was unaware of their existence as well.

"So, are you intending on killing a master teacher?" Seeing the other party activating the lockdown function of the Spirit Emporium, Zhang Xuan turned to the boss and frowned.

Gritting his teeth in rage, the boss sneered.

"Kill a master teacher? How could I dare to do so? However, if you don't hand over my possessions this instant, I fear that I might not be able to hold myself back!"

"Your possessions? These artifacts addressed me as their master and protected me, are your eyes too blind to see that? On the contrary, my possessions have brought your store prestige and class, so the least you can do is pay me the rental fee, right?" Zhang

Xuan replied nonchalantly.

The boss staggered upon hearing those words.

He felt as if he might just die of anger if he were to continue speaking if that fellow.

Pay you the rental fee? You stole my possessions, and you still want me to pay you? Do you take me for a fool?

Hong long long!

An immense accumulation of zhenqi gathered in the boss's palm, as if of the materialization of his rage.

"I will give you one last warning. Return those items to me, and I can consider sparing you. I won't say this again," he threatened menacingly.

Were it not for his fear of School Head Mo and School Head Zhao, he would have long made a move.

Even so, his overwhelming rage was threatening to remove all reason from him, compelling him to make a move.

Seeing the mass of zhenqi in the other party's hands threatening to rip him to pieces any moment now, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"Warning? I have seen plenty of bandits in my life, but I have never seen one who steals as brazenly as you do. You are truly incredible! Since that is the case, allow me to let you in on a secret then!"

He abruptly leaped several dozen meters forward and stepped heavily on the ground before leaping in another direction.

He continued another seven times before returning back to his original position.

"A secret? What are you up to?" Seeing that the fellow was up to something once more, the boss glared at him warily.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan smiled brightly and said, "The

fact is... this Spirit Emporium is mine as well!"

Kacha! Kacha!

A series of mechanisms abruptly spun into action, and the entire Spirit Emporium began to shake in euphoria.

"What? The Spirit Emporium... has acknowledged him as its master as well?"

The boss felt as if the entire world had gone mad.

Chapter 757 Taming the Boss

"Spirit Euphoria? The Spirit Emporium has acknowledged him as its master?"

"What in the world happened?"

"How did that fellow do it?"

...

The crowd trapped in the room were shocked speechless.

At this moment, they finally realized the queerness of the young man before them. With just a few pats here and there, all of the artifacts acknowledged him as their master. With just a few steps, even the Spirit Emporium submitted to him...

Was there anything in the world he couldn't tame?

It was no wonder the boss of the Spirit Emporium was so furious! If they were to see their own possessions being claimed by others in such a manner, they would have gone on a rampage as well!

"Young Master..." Sun Qiang's eyelids twitched uncontrollably.

He'd thought that when the young master said that he would cause trouble, he would only force the other party to compensate for the assault. But from the looks of it, that wasn't just it.

He was planning to overturn the other party's entirety!

This was too vicious!

Even though the old master was also rather extreme as well, he would at least hold back considering his position as a master teacher. On the other hand, it was as if the young master was completely out of control!

However... no matter what, the other party was a Saint! He might be able to hold back for a moment in consideration of the young master's standing as a master teacher, but under such

relentless provocation, his tolerance would swiftly wear thin...

By then, there would be no one but the old master who could save them.

"I want you dead!"

As if Sun Qiang's worst fears had come to be, the boss of the Spirit Emporium roared furiously, and raising his palm, the formidable might of a Saint realm expert came crashing toward his young master.

"Young Master..."

Alarmed, Sun Qiang was just about to rush up to take the blow for the young master when the latter abruptly raised his palm.

"Barrier!"

With those words, dozens of artifacts flew up and stood in front of Zhang Xuan, protecting him from the blow. At the same time, the ground rumbled as the whirring of mechanisms echoed in the air. Several towering walls rose from the ground, sealing both Zhang Xuan and the boss within it.

"Young Master..."

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was locked together with a rampaging Saint realm expert in a narrow space, Sun Qiang immediately rushed forward anxiously. To his shock, however, he realized that the walls blocking him were made of an incredibly resilient material which he couldn't break with his current strength.

"How could I have allowed this happen? If a mishap befalls the young master, how can I ever face the old master?" Sun Qiang cried as he punched the walls desperately.

Before meeting the old master, he had been nothing more than a humble merchant, destined to spend his entire life in a daze in Tianxuan Kingdom, never venturing out to see the wider world beyond.

It was the old master who brought him out from the well he was in, granting his great responsibility despite his humble birth, and helped to raise his cultivation...

The old master had entrusted the young master to his care. If something were to happen to the young master, he would be a sinner!

"Young Master, nothing can happen to you..."

With a trembling body, Sun Qiang fumbled around the wall, attempting to find any point of weaknesses on the wall which he could exploit. However, the wall was built of materials far beyond his current strength. No matter how hard he tried, he was powerless before it.

Peng peng peng peng!

At that moment, the sound of fists and legs sinking into flesh echoed from within the walls.

"The young master is getting beaten up..." Those sounds sent Sun Qiang into utter panic.

His eyes reddened in anxiety, and his heart pounded in apprehension.

"No, I must save the young master, even at the cost of my life..."

He didn't know what else he could at the moment, so he could only try ramming at the wall with his body. However, at that moment, a scream of agony sounded.

"AHHHH! Stop hitting me!

"I admit that I'm at fault; I beg you to let me off!"

Hearing that voice, the fidgety Sun Qiang suddenly froze on the spot.

That voice didn't come from the young master but... the boss of the Spirit Emporium!

The boss was begging for mercy?

Could it be that... the young master was pummeling the Saint realm boss within the walls?

Flabbergasted, Sun Qiang stared at the walls before him with his mouth agape.

...

Returning back to the time when the boss of the Spirit Emporium made a move on Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan knew that even with the artifacts protecting him, he wouldn't last long against the boss. Thus, he immediately activated the mechanism of the Spirit Emporium and summoned the walls beneath the ground to seclude themselves from the world outside.

This way, he would be able to do anything he wished without worrying about prying eyes.

Hu hu hu!

As soon as those walls were in place, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and whipped out a book and twenty Otherworldly Demon puppets.

"Get him!" Zhang Xuan ordered.

With the experience from pummeling the Byzantium Helios Beast, those puppets rushed at the boss and began beating him viciously from head to toe.

All along, the boss had thought that he was only dealing with a Cosmos Bridge realm lad, so there was nothing for him to worry about. Who would have thought the other party would suddenly summon so many Saint realm experts?

Before he could even process what was going on, heavy blows were raining down him, leaving him with heavy bruises and swelling everywhere.

After enduring the heavy beatings for a few moments, he finally found an opening for him to escape. But just as he was about to

move, an overwhelming killing intent crushed down on him, rendering him immobile. As such, he could only continue to suffer the beating.

His current cultivation was only at Saint realm primary stage, a far way off from matching up to the Byzantium Helios Beast. Given how even the latter was done in, how could he possibly withstand the onslaught of the Otherworldly Demon puppets? In just a few moments, he was already utterly subdued.

While the Spirit Emporium was important, how could it compare to his life?

Considering that the other party could retain his composure before his wrath, it was likely that he wasn't some kind soul either. If he didn't beg for mercy, chances were that the other party might just watch nonchalantly as he was beaten to death.

Left with no choice, he could only plead for his life.

"You want me to spare you? Offer your soul to me and acknowledge me as your master!" Zhang Xuan replied indifferently to his pleading.

Zhang Xuan did consider whether he should just kill the boss of the Spirit Emporium, but the death of a Saint would likely result in a huge storm in the city. That could mean a great deal of trouble for him. However, he couldn't simply let the other party off either, especially after all that had happened. Thus, after some contemplation, he'd decided to force the other party into submission instead.

As long as he could hold the other party's soul captive, he wouldn't need to worry about the other party divulging his secret. At the same time, he would gain a Saint realm lackey as well, which would give him more room to deal with matters without resorting to the Otherworldly Demon puppets.

The Otherworldly Demon puppets were his trump card, but they

were a double-edged sword as well.

Anything related to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was sensitive, and he might be branded as a traitor of humanity if he were to be spotted with the puppets. Thus, it would be best for him to limit his usage of them.

"You want me to offer my soul to you?" The boss was taken aback.

In a sense, this was similar to the contract between a beast tamer and their tamed beast.

However, establishing a contract between humans wasn't as simple a procedure. One had to have a profound understanding of souls in order to do so. Of all the occupations, the only one known to be capable of such a feat was the soul oracle.

If that fellow was asking this of him, did it mean that he was a soul oracle?

But hadn't that occupation gone extinct yet?

Seeing the hesitation in the boss's eyes, Zhang Xuan impatiently commanded, "Continue beating him, do not stop until he's dead..."

"Wait a moment!" The boss of the Spirit Emporium waved his hands in a fluster as the puppets in the area marched ferociously toward him once more.

As long as he could continue living, he wouldn't hesitate to acknowledge another man as his master.

He had once committed banditry, and ironically, the experience ended up teaching him how valuable life was. Before it, dignity and pride were mere transient qualities.

"I'll... acknowledge you as my master!" the boss said, knowing that it was either this or death.

He severed a portion of his soul, and a powerful force abruptly pulled it into the glabella of the young man before him.

As a Saint realm expert, he had already gained a certain degree of control over his soul, allowing him to sever a portion of it easily.

"Formidable..." As soon as that fragment of his soul seeped into the other party's glabella, he saw an immense soul reminiscent of a giant towering before it.

The boss's face paled in fright.

He was a Saint realm expert, but the other party's soul was innumerable times larger and stronger than his.

In terms of the strength of their souls, he was no match for the young man before him at all. It was as if pitting an undeveloped child against a behemoth!

Could it be that... he is really a soul oracle? But even soul oracles wouldn't have such a powerful soul...

The boss's body trembled in astonishment.

Even though he had never met a soul oracle before, he had once read a few records on them. While soul oracles did specialize in soul cultivation, it wasn't to such an exaggerated extent. The soul he was seeing before him shattered what he had thought to be possible for a soul... Just how in the world did the other party cultivate his soul?

And where did this freak come from?

Hu!

While the boss was immersed in his shock, the fragment of his soul was fused into the other party's soul. With this, as long as the young man before him willed it, he would die instantaneously. Not daring to show the slightest disrespect for the young man, he hurriedly clasped his fist and bowed respectfully. "Master!"

"Good, call me Young Master!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

After the affair with Mo Hunsheng, Zhang Xuan had some experience with establishing a contract with other humans, so it

went much smoother this time.

"Yes, Young Master!" the boss replied politely.

Knowing that the other party was no longer able to stand against him, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He returned Vicious and the other Otherworldly Demon puppets into his ring before turning to the boss and asking, "What is your name?"

Since the other party was his subordinate now, he should at least know the other party's name. After all, he couldn't possibly keep addressing the other party as 'boss'!

"I am Wei Changfeng 1 !" the boss replied.

"Braving through the wind and waves... You have a good name. Alright, I'll call you Little Feng 2 then!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Yes!" Wei Changfeng nodded hurriedly.

"Keep everything that has happened in here a secret. Not a soul is to learn of it!" Zhang Xuan instructed.

"Don't worry, Young Master. I won't speak a word of it to anyone!" Wei Changfeng replied.

For a Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator to command twenty Saint realm puppets... No one would believe his words even if he were to divulge it!

After ensuring that the other party wouldn't divulge the matter, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. Following which, he asked, "Do you know why I came to your Spirit Emporium to cause trouble?"

"Forgive me for my ignorance, but I am unaware of the reason!" Wei Changfeng replied with a sliver of doubt in his tone.

"The reason is simple, your Spirit Emporium, out of greed, attempted to lay its hands on my students and butler. These men are your subordinates, right?"

With a casual grasp, the roof of the Spirit Emporium opened up,

and the Great Violetwing Beast flew in and tossed four semi-dead fellows in.

Upon seeing the faces of the four men, Wei Changfeng's face twitched as he replied, "Yes!"

"I'll leave it to you to deal with them!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands.

"Also, I want you to clear whatever work you have the Spirit Emporium as soon as possible and come work for me. Don't worry, as long as you do well, I will guide you in your cultivation and bring you to greater heights!"

"Yes!" Wei Changfeng nodded in response.

As a servant, he could only take whatever his master said at face value. He didn't have the right to refuse the other party.

In truth, he didn't really believe that Zhang Xuan would be able to raise his cultivation.

After all, as a Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator, how could the other party have the knowledge and experience to guide him, a Saint realm cultivator, in his cultivation? That was a huge joke!

"You don't believe me?" Seeing through Wei Changfeng's thoughts, Zhang Xuan smiled.

"I dare not to!" Wei Changfeng swiftly replied.

"If I am not mistaken, the reason you started the Spirit Emporium and stole the artifacts of others is all to save a person, right?" Zhang Xuan asked impassively.

"H-how did you know?"

Wei Changfeng's eyes widened in astonishment.

Chapter 758 Returning to the Academy

When Wei Changfeng had executed a battle technique against him, Zhang Xuan had already compiled a book on him via the Library of Heaven's Path.

Initially, he harbored great disdain for the other party for the vile deeds he had done, but after learning of the reason behind his actions, he couldn't help but feel a little pity for him.

It wasn't that Wei Changfeng was a person with insatiable greed, but that he needed those to save a life.

"Regardless of how I know, I can tell you this. As long as you serve me well, I will help you save her. Even if it is beyond my means, I will do my best to find someone who possesses the ability to do so!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Y-you..." Wei Changfeng's body trembled.

The other party was right. The reason he had opened the Spirit Emporium and gathered all kinds of artifacts in it despite risking making a lot of enemies was all so to treat his severely ill daughter.

His daughter's vitals had been wounded when she was still a fetus, resulting in her innate frailty from birth. He had sought many famous physicians, but there were none who could offer him a solution. In the end, it was a 6-star pinnacle physician who had given him a prescription and told him that he could lengthen the lifespan of his daughter by feeding her the spirit contained within artifacts.

It was through this matter that his daughter had lasted the past few years.

However, this only alleviated her condition temporary, and its effectiveness was wearing thin. If a cure couldn't be found soon, she wouldn't have long to live.

However, this issue was only known amongst the Saints in

Hongyuan City. How did he learn of it?

"If the young master can really save my daughter, I will do anything to repay the favor, even if it means braving through hell!" Recalling the various incredible means of the young man before him, Wei Changfeng couldn't help but have his hopes lifted. He immediately kneeled to the floor and bowed.

"I don't need you to brave through hell for me. As long as you serve me well, you will be well rewarded!" Zhang Xuan said as he took out a wine gourd and passed it over. "Drink it!"

"Yes!" Even though Wei Changfeng was surprised by the abrupt gesture, he didn't dare to disobey the other party's words. Thus, he pried open the lid and gulped down the wine.

Gugugugu!

As the fine wine entered his body, he immediately felt a warm surge of energy flowing through his veins. At a pace visible to the eye, the injuries he had sustained from the puppets healed, and before long, he had already made a full recovery.

"This is... Saint recovery medicine?" Wei Changfeng narrowed his eyes.

Despite being a Saint realm expert and the head of the Spirit Emporium, he had never seen a Saint recovery medicine with effects as pronounced as this.

For his wounds to heal immediately after drinking it... Perhaps, the young master might just be able to save his daughter's life!

"Let's clear up this mess first!" Zhang Xuan said.

If he wanted to win the absolute loyalty of his subordinates, he would have to strike a balance between the carrot and stick. After forcing the other party in submission, it was only right to give him some benefits so as to give him some expectations for the future.

Otherwise, even if Zhang Xuan held his soul hostage, if the other

party's heart wasn't with him, that would be no different from carrying a ticking time bomb around with him.

"Yes!" Knowing that it was impossible for the young master to save his daughter considering that he had yet to achieve anything for the other party, Wei Changfeng didn't pursue the matter.

Jiya!

The mechanisms rumbled, the wall isolating the duo slowly vanished, and Sun Qiang and the others came into sight.

"Boss!"

The guards rushed forward anxiously, but upon seeing that Zhang Xuan was still alive and kicking, the guards encircled him and drew their weapons.

"Insolent!" Wei Changfeng leaped in fright upon seeing that sight. "From today onward, he shall be my young master, so you must address him as young master as well. You must treat him with even more respect with me, and anyone who defies this order will be killed. There will be no chances given!"

"Young master?" The guards were taken aback.

Did the boss hit his head somewhere?

The other party had just wreaked havoc in his territory, and he was ordering them to address the culprit as 'young master'?

But despite their bewilderment, they knew that the boss wasn't kidding given the grim expression on his face. Thus, they lowered their heads and clasped their fists. "Paying respect to the young master!"

"This..."

The cultivators watching the spectacle from the side were stunned speechless.

They'd thought that it was incredible of that young man to make all of those artifacts and even the Spirit Emporium acknowledge

him as their master... But to think that he would even tame the Saint realm boss of the Spirit Emporium!

Could there be anything more exaggerated than this?

"Young Master..." Sun Qiang's lips twitched.

He was still worried that some mishap would befall on the young master... But from the looks of it now, his worries were unfounded.

To tame a Saint realm cultivator despite being at Cosmos Bridge realm, the young master was just a step away from shattering the atmosphere!

"As expected of the old master's student, he does have the old master's flair in him!" Sun Qiang remarked in awe.

After organizing the guards, Wei Changfeng turned to the crowd and clasped his fist.

"Everyone, I ask of you not to speak a word of what happened here today outside. You will have my gratitude for that."

Even though these men hadn't seen the battle for themselves, it did seem that the young master intended to keep a low profile, so it would be ideal for him to limit any rumors as far as he could.

In any case, the young master hadn't revealed his name at any point, so these men would be unlikely to point him out anyway.

"Don't worry, Boss. Our lips are sealed!"

"Confidentiality has always been my strong suit..."

The cultivators hurriedly nodded.

Considering that a master teacher and the boss of the Spirit Emporium were involved in this conflict, they would not dare gossip about it for fear of losing their heads.

And more importantly... even if they were to talk about the affairs that had happened today, others would simply take them as

lunatics!

After all, they wouldn't have believed such a thing to be possible either if they hadn't witnessed it themselves.

Hearing the voices of agreement, Wei Changfeng turned to the attendants and instructed, "Men, give these guests a gift package each as compensation for the trauma they have suffered from this incident!"

To be able to build a business empire from scratch and sustain it for so many years in Hongyuan Empire wasn't an easy feat. Wei Changfeng was also quite a capable person himself.

With a suitable use of threat and reward, those men should understand that it wouldn't be to their advantage to talk.

"Good!" Seeing how Xiao Feng dealt with the incident promptly, Zhang Xuan nodded in commendation.

In truth, the Spirit Emporium didn't have as many fakes as he'd claimed. Most of it was due to his framing.

Even though the appraiser did exaggerate about the grade-6 pill, it wasn't so extreme that it could be considered poison. In truth, the so-called poison was a surge of zhenqi which he slipped into the pill while holding the jade box.

After learning the Heaven's Path Poison Art, he could turn his Heaven's Path zhenqi into lethal poison on a whim.

With that, poisoning a Sample Pill Beast to death was not a difficult feat at all.

If someone had realized what was going on and waited for a moment longer with the pill, the zhenqi he had hidden inside would have dissipated and lost its effect.

As for the Bronze Gong, as a soul oracle, it was exceedingly easy for him to nullify its soul attack.

Most of the subsequent fakes that he had pointed out were also

tampered by him one way in another. He had identified their flaws via the Library of Heaven's Path and framed his cases accordingly. As easy as that, everything in the room had soon turned into a fake.

As for the acknowledgement by the artifacts, just as Sun Qiang had thought, Zhang Xuan had already made them submit to him while introducing the various 'fakes' to the crowd. If the other party had chosen to compensate him, he would have left without doing anything. Otherwise, he'd planned to tear apart the other party's nest with their own artifacts.

"Let's return!"

Since Wei Changfeng had sent his men after Sun Qiang, it was natural that he would know where their residence was. With his soul shackled, he would surely come to them after finishing up whatever he had to do at the Spirit Emporium.

With his goal achieved, there was no need for Zhang Xuan to remain in the Spirit Emporium any longer. Thus, he and Sun Qiang leaped onto the back of the Great Violetwing Beast and soared into the sky, disappearing from everyone's sight.

Back at the residence...

"Young master, these are the high-tier spirit stones that the boss of the Spirit Emporium gave us earlier on!"

Sun Qiang passed over the ten high-tier spirit stones which he had taken from Wei Changfeng earlier on.

"Alright!"

Grabbing hold of them, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. After which, he instructed, "You need not worry about money any longer. Go ahead and find a larger residence for us."

With the boss of the Spirit Emporium as his subordinate, money was no longer an issue to them. Naturally, it was about time for them to find a more fitting residence. Honestly speaking, this place

was a little too small for his liking. There wasn't even enough space for him to interrogate the Byzantium Helios Beast.

"Yes!" Sun Qiang nodded.

"For the time being, you all won't require high-tier spirit stones for your cultivation. Here are some artifacts and pills, deal with them as you deem fit. If it is of any use to your cultivation, go ahead and use it!"

Flicking his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out the various items which he had taken from the Spirit Emporium earlier.

Sun Qiang stored the items in his storage ring and nodded.

With these items, Zheng Yang and the others would be able to advance their cultivation by leaps and bounds.

Sun Qiang suddenly recalled a matter and reported, "Young Master, when I was out earlier today, I saw a residence that fits our criteria. Not only is it in close proximity to the Master Teacher Academy, it also has all of the amenities we require. However... it seemed like someone has just purchased it!"

"It can't be helped if someone has already taken it. Hongyuan City is very big; it shouldn't be too difficult for us to find another larger residence," Zhang Xuan replied.

Since the residence was only purchased recently, it was unlikely that the owner would be willing to sell it for the time being. Since that was the case, they might have better luck searching for another residence in the city. Besides, they weren't in a rush either.

"Alright. I will be in the Master Teacher Academy the next few days. If there is anything urgent, contact me through the Great Violetwing Beast. If that fails, go ahead and liaise with Xiao Feng!" Zhang Xuan instructed.

After Zhang Xuan was done with the arrangements, he leaped onto the back of the Great Violetwing Beast and flew for the

academy.

With this matter resolved, it was about time for him to head to the Terpsichore School and Demonic Tunist School to browse through their books.

He had to deal with the Innate Fetal Poison in his soul as soon as possible so as to avoid any unexpected circumstances.

Zhang Xuan had the Great Violetwing Beast land at the Elite Sector before sending it back to Sun Qiang's side. Just as he was about to ask around where the Demonic Tunist School and Terpsichore School were, he suddenly heard knocking on his door.

Opening his door, he saw Ruohuan gongzi, Luo Xuan, Song Chao, and a few others standing at the doorway.

After the entrance examination, they had been settled into their dormitories by Bai shi and the other seniors. Upon hearing that Zhang shi had taken up a residence in the Elite Sector, they came over to pay their greetings.

After trading a few pleasantries, Ruohuan gongzi dived into the main topic at hand and asked, "Brother Zhang, there is an event for students to find their teachers today. Are you going to participate in it?"

"I will pass." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He had no intentions of finding a teacher. With the Library of Heaven's Path, all he needed was an ample number of books.

"Actually, the reason we came to look for you today is to seek Brother Zhang opinion on which teacher we should acknowledge in the academy!" Ruohuan gongzi said sheepishly.

In terms of age, he and Luo Xuan could be considered as Zhang Xuan's senior. However, in the Master Teacher Continent, seniority was determined by one's capability. In a sense, addressing Zhang Xuan as a fellow peer could be considered as a sign of respect to him.

"This... I am not too familiar with the teachers of the academy." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

How could he know which teacher would be the best in the academy? He wasn't going to seek a teacher in the first place!

"You aren't familiar with the teachers of the academy? How can that be! We have already heard the rumors, and it seemed like you even rejected School Head Mo's offer to become his direct disciple..." Luo Xuan exclaimed in disbelief.

Zhang Shi had performed outstandingly in the entrance examination, winning over School Head Mo's admiration. As such, the latter had offered to take the other in as his direct disciple, only to be flatly rejected.

This matter had already spread like wildfire across the entire academy.

Since you rejected even School Head Mo's offer, doesn't that mean that you have a better candidate in mind?

"I haven't thought that far yet. Speaking of which, since you are here, does it mean that you already have a person in mind? Why don't you tell me? I will help you ask around!" Zhang Xuan smiled.

Since they were asking for his opinion, they must have already taken a look around and had a candidate in mind, just that they were still feeling a little uncertain about their choices.

Most freshmen lacked connections with the seniors to enquire about the various teachers in the academy. However, Zhang Xuan was acquainted with Luo Qiqi and Yu Fei-er, as well as several school heads in the academy.

If those didn't work, he could also ask the students in the Elite Sector; surely at least one of them would be willing to share some insights.

Even though it had only been two days since Zhang Xuan had cleared the entrance examination, he had already forged several

connections which allowed him to maneuver around the academy easily.

Chapter 759 Ashen Moon Faction

"The teachers of the ten schools will be conducting a public lecture each on the 'Impartation Podium' later today. We hope that Brother Zhang can attend it with us. Your eyes are far more discerning than ours, so we trust your judgement more," Ruohuan gongzi said awkwardly.

After suffering multiple blows while competing with the man before him, he knew better than anyone else that the other party was a man of incredible capability.

If the other party could help him find a teacher, it would definitely be far better than him fumbling around and trying his luck.

There were only three days for students to find a teacher. Their future was at stake here. They could soar to great heights with a good teacher, but if they were to make a mistake with this, they could potentially end up capping their future accomplishments instead.

Eventually, they'd decided that it would be best for them to consult Zhang Xuan on this matter. They had all come from the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, so they were familiar with one another.

Even when compared to Hong shi and the others, Zhang shi's judgement was still far more precise and accurate.

"Impartation Podium? Public lecture?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

Too overwhelmed by challenging the blacksmith examination, he hadn't had the time to learn what was going on in the academy yet.

The Impartation Podium stood at the very center of the academy, and it was usually the venue for most major events. At the same time, it also served as a dueling platform for students to resolve their differences.

As for public lectures, he had heard of them back when he was still a teacher in Hongtian Academy.

To put it simply, it was a lesson which anyone could attend if they wanted.

The public lectures served as a platform for students to assess a teacher's capability so that they could better choose their teachers.

At the same time, it also introduced a fair degree of rivalry among the teaching staff, encouraging them to work harder and strive for excellence in their teaching.

"Yes, does Zhang shi want to head over as well?" Everyone turned to look at Zhang Xuan.

Seeing the determined expressions on their faces, it was clear that they wouldn't give up easily on this matter. After all, it was extremely easy for one to be overwhelmed by the sheer number of master teachers conducting public lectures there.

This choice could potentially determine how far they would rise as a master teacher, so they weren't willing to take it lightly.

After a moment of contemplation, Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Alright, I will go with you all then. This will be a good opportunity to see the standard of the teachers in the academy..."

Since most of the teachers were participating in this event, it was unlikely that there would be any people at the Terpsichore School or Demonic Tunist School, making it difficult for him to find the books he sought. Thus, he might as well make use of the time to take a peek at the quality of lessons in Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy so that he could have a rough gauge of where he stood.

With Zhang Xuan having made up his mind, the group headed left for the Impartation Podium. It was some distance away from the Elite Sector, but with their current cultivation, it didn't take too long for them to arrive at their destination.

There was only one word that could be used to describe the venue—congested.

All thirty thousand freshmen were currently standing atop the Impartation Podium, in search of a suitable teacher for them. There were also a couple of seniors who had decided to join in the bustle as well. Despite the immense size of the podium, it was completely packed with men. One would have easily gotten lost if it had been their first time here.

Ruohuan gongzi had looked into the event beforehand, so he began introducing the various technicalities regarding it.

"In order to better facilitate the freshmen around the various public lectures held by the teachers, they have divided the Impartation Podium in a manner such that there's a narrow passageway for movement, and as long as one walks along the passageway, they will be able to listen to the lectures held by all of the teachers."

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan glanced at the crowd ahead of him, and indeed, he could see that most people were heading in the same direction, which was likely where the passageway Ruohuan gongzi mentioned was.

Standing on elevated platforms on both sides of the passageway were teachers who were busy lecturing the crowd gathered around them. Being too far away, the group wasn't able to hear the content of the lectures. Nevertheless, they could see the intoxicated looks of the students listening to the lectures, seemingly fully-immersed in the lecturers' words.

Nearly all of the teachers in the Master Teacher Academy were 6-star master teachers, and at such a level, how could their ability to impart knowledge possibly be lacking? No matter how boring their lessons might be, their deep understanding of cultivation easily made up for it. Their words carried a kind of strength that drew people in, leaving the listeners deeply entranced by the brand-new

world opened to them.

"Juniors, may I interest you in the 'Teacher Information Documentation'?"

Just as the group was about to follow the crowd into the passageway, a smiling young man suddenly walked up to them and blocked their way.

The young man seemed to be in his thirties, possessing a lanky figure reminiscent of a bamboo. A 5-star emblem stood on his chest, which showed that he was at least a Grade-2 student in the academy.

"Teacher Information Documentation?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

The young man glanced in the surroundings, and after ensuring that no one was looking, he whipped out a book and passed it over while whispering in a hushed voice, "Yes. Our Ashen Moon Faction has specially compiled all of the information regarding the teachers in the academy, as well as their various unique characteristics, interests, and the results of their students. Using this as a reference as you listen to the various public lectures, you will be able to make a better choice..."

"There is such a thing?"

Bewildered, Zhang Xuan took the book, and just as he was about to flip it open, the young man before abruptly stopped him.

"Every single one of us in the Master Teacher Academy possesses a photographic memory. If I allow you to browse through the book, how am I supposed to sell it? If you wish to look at it, you will have to buy it..."

Anyone with a Soul Depth beyond 10 would possess a photographic memory. Considering that the minimum requirement to enter the academy was for one to be a 4-star master teacher, it meant that every single student had a photographic memory.

The Teacher Information Documentation contained extremely precious information, and the other party was clearly intending on using it to earn some additional money. If he were to allow his customers to browse through it and memorize its contents, who would bother buying the book?

"How much does it cost?" Ruohuan gongzi asked.

Since this document had been prepared by the seniors, it should be accurate. If they could buy a copy, it would help facilitate them in choosing which teacher to acknowledge.

"Our Ashen Moon Faction spent great effort to gather and compile the information, so we have to charge a higher price in order to recoup our losses. Each copy costs a hundred middle-tier spirit stones, and the price isn't up for negotiation!" the young man said.

"A hundred middle-tier spirit stones?" Everyone was shocked.

Coming from the Myriad Kingdom Alliance, Ruohuan gongzi had barely seen any middle-tier spirit stones in his life. Luo Xuan, who had come from the strongest sect in the region, fared slightly better in his financial position, but forking out a hundred middle-tier spirit stones was still far beyond his means.

As for Song Chao, he could hardly take out a middle-tier spirit stone under Zhang Xuan's beguilement back then, so asking him to take out a hundred at once was clearly asking too much.

In other words, of all of them, Zhang Xuan was the only one who could afford the document!

The price sure was steep!

Taking the distressed expressions before him into sight, the young man hurriedly said, "You all find the documentation expensive? You do know that there is detailed information on each and every teacher in here, right? Once you find a suitable teacher, it's just a matter of time before you make the breakthrough to

become a 5-star master teacher. By then, you won't need to worry about having insufficient middle-tier spirit stones anymore!"

There was a huge gap between each rank of a master teacher. While there were limited opportunities for a 4-star master teacher to earn middle-tier spirit stones, 5-star master teachers didn't have such a worry.

"Thank you for your concern, but we don't need it!" Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

A hundred middle-tier spirit stones for a document... That was daylight robbery!

Besides, Zhang Xuan didn't need such a thing either.

For one, he had just touched the book earlier, and a replica had appeared in his mind... On top of that, his version was more detailed with indications to mark which information was inaccurate.

"You don't need it? How could you not need it? Finding a suitable teacher in the academy is of utmost importance! If you take this lightly, you might just find yourself unable to progress a single step forward as a master teacher, and eventually, you might even end up being expelled by the academy..." Not expecting the freshmen to turn down his offer, the young man froze for a moment before hurriedly trying to persuade them.

Rejecting a teacher that one had acknowledged was an extremely troublesome process that could result in dire consequences, so it was extremely important for the freshmen to choose their teacher wisely.

If they were to make the wrong decision, their future would be bleak.

"We really don't need it. We bought a copy earlier, so we don't need another one!" Zhang Xuan said.

"You have already bought one?"

The young man froze for a moment before a thought struck him, and he said, "Did you buy from the True Helios Faction instead? I can tell you safely that the documentation they have is incomplete and inaccurate, so you will be far safer buying from me..."

"If I may ask, what are the True Helios Faction and Ashen Moon Faction that you speak of?" Zhang Xuan asked in confusion.

"You don't know?"

The young man was shocked for an instant before nodding in realization. "I forgot, you have just arrived in the academy, so it's natural for you to be unaware of it. Our academy has many student organizations, and every single one of them was established by the strongest students in the academy. Our Ashen Moon Faction is led by Senior Long Cangyue while the True Helios Faction is headed by Senior Xue Zhenyang!"

"Long Cangyue? Xue Zhenyang?"

"Un, both of them are esteemed Grade-5 seniors, and they possess formidable strength. As long as you join any organization, you will be given the opportunity to receive pointers from the seniors!" the young man said proudly.

"Receive pointers?" Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before he understood what was going on.

To become a Grade-5 student, one had to be a 6-star low-tier master teacher.

(Grade-1 students are at 4-star pinnacle and half 5-star; Grade-2 students are at 5-star low-tier, Grade-3 students are at 5-star high-tier; Grade-4 students are at 5-star pinnacle; Grade-5 students are at 6-star low-tier.)

Often, a teacher would be paired with many students, and this left them little time to care for all of them. Thus, it would be highly beneficial if they could receive the pointers of a 6-star low-tier master teacher outside of lessons as well.

"Indeed. The academy is filled with many geniuses, and if you can't keep up, you will only lag behind. This means that you might lose the opportunity to go on experiential training and obtain valuable cultivation resources... If you wish to keep up, the only way before you is to join one of these factions!" the young man said.

Hearing those words, Ruohuan gongzi, Luo Xuan, and the others couldn't help but nod in agreement.

Unlike Zhang shi, they didn't possess extraordinary talent or capability. Unless they received all of the resources they could get, it was impossible for them to stand out amidst all of the geniuses in the Master Teacher Academy.

If they couldn't stand out, they might lose out on many valuable opportunities offered by the academy, thus limiting their future achievements.

Thus, it was inevitable that they would have to join one of these student factions.

"Alright, you will get to know more of it in the future, so there is no need to worry about it at this point. For now, what is important is for you to find a teacher who fits your criteria, and the documentation offered by the True Helios Faction won't be enough for it. I am only saying this out of worry, but you really should buy the one from our Ashen Moon Faction. Not to brag, but our Senior Long Cangyue received a much higher placing than Senior Xue Zhenyang in the Annual Tournament..."

The young man continued to advertise the book in his hand.

"I appreciate your gesture, but we really don't need it..."

If the book only cost one or two middle-tier spirit stone, Zhang Xuan could still consider buying it. But a hundred? That was clearly exploitation! How could he agree to it?

Thus, he decided to turn down the offer.

Seeing that the few freshmen before him were still unwilling to buy the document after all he had said, the young man's face darkened.

"You refuse? That won't do! Since you bought the documentation from True Helios Faction, you must buy the one from our Ashen Moon Faction as well. Otherwise, I can tell you that you will face a lot of trouble in the future for offending us!"

The smile had disappeared from his face, and his tone was menacing.

"Face a lot of trouble? Are you threatening us?" Zhang Xuan asked impassively.

The young man harrumphed.

"Threatening? Of course not, this is just a warning from me in my capacity as your senior. Even though all of the students in the Master Teacher Academy are master teachers, the water here isn't as calm as it seems!"

Chapter 760 Meeting the White-robed Lady Once More

"Oh? Why is that so?" Zhang Xuan asked with a smile, unfazed by the other party's threat.

"There is a limit to the cultivation resources, training fields, and opportunities that the academy can offer to the students each year. Even slots for working as the receptionists or attendants of the various schools don't come easily! If you offend our Ashen Moon Faction, I can guarantee you that we possess more than sufficient power to ensure that you won't be able to land yourself any missions or tasks year after year, making it impossible for you to earn even a single Academic Credit!" the young man said.

As a powerful student faction in the academy, it wasn't too difficult for them to make the life of a freshman a living hell.

"Unless..."

The young man paused. "Unless you join our Ashen Moon Faction! Only if you join us will we extend our umbrella of protection to you. No other faction will dare to seek trouble with you, and there are also many faction-based missions and tasks that you will be able to participate in to earn Academic Credits. More importantly... if you join now, we can give you a copy of our Teacher Information Documentation for free, sparing you from the additional expense!"

"There are so many benefits from joining the Ashen Moon Faction? But there is no such thing as a free lunch in the world... What will we have to give in return?" Ruohuan gongzi asked.

Since the faction was willing to offer its members so many benefits, surely it had to receive something in return. Otherwise, who would be so kind-hearted as to open a charity in the competitive academy?

"Simple. Once you become a member, you must obey the leadership of the Ashen Moon Sect. On top of that, you must pay an Academic Credit to the faction each year and help manage the businesses of the faction," the young man replied.

"Pay an Academic Credit to the faction? Help manage the businesses of the faction?" Everyone fell into deep thought.

As they had expected, such a sweet deal couldn't possibly be without its shortcomings.

Putting aside how they didn't have a single Academic Credit with them at the moment, even if they did, there was no Academic Credit that came easily. One Academic Credit each year was definitely a huge sum for them as Grade-1 students.

At the same time, they couldn't help but be shocked by how lucrative factions were. If the faction were to have a hundred men, wouldn't that mean that they would receive a hundred Academic Credits annually?

It was no wonder the Grade-5 seniors would devote their time to establishing student factions and offering pointers to the members of their factions! With such benefits, they would do it if they were in the other party's position as well!

As for the businesses, their primary function was probably to finance the expenses of the faction. After all, be it to build connections, conduct activities, or to reward the contributions of its members, they would surely need a source of income for its operations.

As master teachers, the students all had supporting occupations, so they could contribute to the finances of the faction through offering pills they had forged or weapons they had smithed.

For one, the young man before them who was marketing the Teacher Information Documentation to them would probably have to hand the profits earned over to the faction eventually.

The young man harrumphed.

"That's right. You only have two options now. You can either buy the document or join our faction, or else you can look forward to endless trouble in the academy!"

"Zhang shi..." Ruohuan gongzi, Song Chao, and the others quickly turned their sights over to Zhang Xuan.

The latter had already become their pillar of support, so in times of difficulty, they couldn't help but subconsciously look toward him for help.

"My apologies, but we will be taking neither of the options!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He wasn't interested in the book nor the benefits the faction had to offer.

No matter how powerful the student factions were, could they be any greater than becoming the junior of one of the Ten Great Master Teachers? Since he'd already turned down the latter, how could he possibly be, in the least, interested in the former?

"You have guts! You'd better pray that you manage to find a strong backer in this event, or else be prepared to be put through living hell in the academy!" Seeing that the group before him rejecting his offer, the young man glared at them ferociously before flinging his sleeves and leaving.

"Zhang shi, what should we do if they really come knocking on our doors?" Song Chao and the others asked worriedly.

They didn't have Zhang Xuan's capability or backing, so unlike him, they couldn't afford to offend a powerful organization in the academy.

Zhang Xuan waved his hands. "We are in the Master Teacher Academy, so they dare not go too far. If they really try to pull something, I will look for School Head Mo and School Head Zhao to intervene in the matter, so you don't have to worry. For the

time being, let us focus on finding a teacher for you first."

Since they were master teachers, even if they wished to provoke another student, they would have to play within the rules... And in a game of rules, Zhang Xuan was confident that he could leave them on the verge of a breakdown.

Putting aside a mere student faction, even all of the Ten Great Master Teachers might not be a match for him in that regard!

Hearing Zhang Xuan's promise, the others felt a little reassured.

"Alright, we will be depending on you then..."

As the group made their way to the passageway, they encountered a few other factions such as the Descending Lunar Faction and Demon Assembly Faction. They attempted to persuade them to either join their faction or purchase their intelligence as well.

Zhang Xuan casually took hold of their documents, and after noting that they were all around the same as the one offered by the Ashen Moon Faction, he turned them down politely.

Seeing the freshmen refusing all of their offers and rushing straight to the public lecture, the seniors in charge of selling the documents and promoting their factions shot them looks of sympathy.

If one wanted to soar in the academy, there were two conventions they would have to go through. One, they had to find themselves a suitable teacher. Two, they had to join a faction. Otherwise, if they were to go independent, they would be vulnerable to any trouble, and every single step they took would be fraught with difficulties. Academic Credits would fall beyond their reach, causing their progress to stagnate.

Not bothered by those arrogant seniors, Zhang Xuan led the group straight toward the passageway.

A long queue had formed at the entrance of the passageway.

On the very first stage, a forty-year-old teacher was currently in the midst of his lecture. Despite the loud bustle in the surroundings, the crowd beneath could still hear his voice resounding by their ears clearly, as if he was speaking to them personally.

"The core of cultivation lies in the heart. In the Consonant Spirit realm, one seeks to achieve a harmony between the body and soul, and in order to temper one's soul, one has to temper one's heart first..."

According to a plaque hanging on the stage, he was a 6-star high-tier master teacher from the Apothecary School named Li Yuan, and the content of his lecture was regarding cultivation in the Consonant Spirit realm.

After listening to it for a short moment, Zhang Xuan nodded.

Even though the middle-aged teacher's lecture was still miles away from matching up to him and there were several mistakes in his understanding, Zhang Xuan still had to admit that the content he delivered was novel. If it was anyone else who was listening to this lecture, he might just receive a stroke of inspiration and advance even further in the Consonant Spirit realm.

However, it was useless to Zhang Xuan.

"This Li Shi from the Apothecary School is very detailed in his explanations, and he is very generous as well. If you were to become his student, you should be able to get a huge discount off his pills, sparing you a lot of money..." With a hushed voice, Zhang Xuan swiftly introduced the profile of the middle-aged teacher on the stage.

They had participated in the Master Teacher Tournament alongside Zhang Xuan, and they knew that he possessed the ability to view the content of a book without even flipping its pages. Thus, they weren't too surprised by his revelation, and they took a mental note of his words.

Students were given three days to select their teacher after this event, so there was no hurry. Most students would use this time to sort out their choices before making their decision.

"Let's continue on!" After gaining a clear assessment of the unique traits and capability of the middle-aged teacher, Zhang Xuan gestured for the group to proceed on.

The next teacher in the line was from the Physician School. His lecture was regarding the fusion of the Way of Medicine into cultivation, allowing one to remain resilient in the face of severe illnesses.

"If you were to learn from this teacher, you might not improve as fast as you would under the teacher from the Apothecary School, but he will help you build a strong foundation which will be beneficial to you in the future!" Zhang Xuan introduced.

In the Master Teacher Academy, students could choose to join one of the ten schools, and once they did so, they would have to put the corresponding supporting occupation as their second priority after master teacher.

Naturally, joining a school would grant the students certain privileges as well. For example, if one were to join the Apothecary School, they would be able to purchase pills at a discounted price.

If one were to join the Physician School, they would gain access to documents regarding the study of the human body, allowing them to build up a strong foundation in their cultivation.

The Blacksmith School had valuable physical body cultivation technique manuals; the Beast Tamer School had private mountains filled with rare beasts; the Painter School had high-tier paintings that allowed one to calm their mind, enhancing their rate of cultivation...

All in all, each school had their own strengths. Most students would usually choose based on their interest and proficiency in the

occupation.

After walking around for a while longer, Zhang Xuan slowly lost interest. Thus, he eventually searched for a less crowded area to stop at and took out an empty book. Taking out a brush and an ink slab, he swiftly copied down the accurate details which he had gathered from the documents compiled by the various factions, as well as what he had observed through the public lectures.

"I have written down the details regarding the teachers in this book, feel free to browse through it. It should be enough for you to find a suitable teacher!"

This book, which had been verified using the Library of Heaven's Path, had no errors whatsoever. With it, Ruohuan gongzi and the others should have no trouble finding a suitable teacher for themselves.

"Un!" Ruohuan gongzi and the others nodded.

By corroborating the content of the book Zhang Xuan compiled with the public lectures they had just listened to, they would have more than enough information to make a judgement themselves. There was no need for them to bother Zhang shi over the issue anymore.

"While you all are looking at the book, I will go take a walk around." Passing the book to them, Zhang Xuan stretched his back lazily. Just as he was contemplating whether he should make his way to the Terpsichore School or Demonic Tunist School, he suddenly caught sight of a silhouette which sent a jolt through his body.

Is that... her?

It was an elegant white-robed figure walking amidst the bustling crowd. Despite the clamor around her, her presence seemed to bring about a soothing aura to the surroundings, as if a calm painting.

This was the exact same sensation that he had felt from the white-robed lady whom he had met at the Verdant Mountain back in Huanyu Empire.

The world was big, so Zhang Xuan had thought that he would never see the other party ever again after their abrupt parting. But that familiar disposition and silhouette... Could it be her?

Fearing that it was just an illusion and he might lose sight of her the next moment, he dared not turn his eyes away from her.

Despite the congestion ahead, the crowd seemed to open up before the white-robed figure through some mysterious force, creating ample space for her to walk through. Yet, despite this bizarre phenomenon, there didn't seem to be a single person amidst the crowd who had realized it yet, as if it was a perfectly ordinary occurrence.

What an incredible ability! Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

This phenomenon could only be produced by the comprehension of spatial laws.

Those students had clearly moved from their original positions, but it seemed to them as if they were still standing on the same spot.

Even Zhang Xuan didn't possess the means to do the same.

"Is it really her?" Zhang Xuan muttered in a daze.

Back when he'd first met the white-robed lady in the Verdant Mountain, he had sensed that the other party's cultivation wasn't too high. That was why he'd rushed forward to save her upon seeing that she had been encircled. Yet, when he was suffering a backlash due to the incompatibility between his soul and body, she was the one who'd intervened and facilitated an impeccable fusion between his soul and body.

Such an ability was far beyond Zhang Xuan's current means.

From this, it could be seen that she had concealed her true strength. Even at this time, he was still unable to gain a clear grasp of her strength.

"Flaws!" Zhang Xuan muttered, but the next moment, he froze.

She isn't using a battle technique?

He'd thought that such manipulation of space could be considered as the usage of a battle technique, so he'd tried to check it through the Library of Heaven's Path. However, the Library of Heaven's Path remained completely silent.

In other words, the young lady before him wasn't using a battle technique.

Otherwise, the Library of Heaven's Path would surely have been able to compile a book on her!

So far, he had yet to encounter anything which the Library of Heaven's Path was unable to discern.

Hu!

Bewildered, Zhang Xuan was just about to walk forward to take a closer look when the white-robed figure, as if sensing his gaze, stopped and turned around.

A beautiful face came into sight.

It was indeed the white-robed lady he had met back then!

Even though there were certain differences to her facial features due to some kind of disguise she was donning, those were incapable of fooling his Eye of Insight. With just a glance, he could tell that it was the young lady whom he had met back in the mountains.

Unable to suppress his agitation, he rushed up to her and said nervously, "Y-you are here as well?"

The young lady was scanning her surroundings, as if trying to determine the source of the gaze when she suddenly caught sight

of him. Her eyes lit up, and a light smile surfaced on her lips. For an instant, it was as if a hundred flowers had bloomed.

Chapter 761 You Are a Teacher

That lady carried a unique poise which emanated an explicable beauty when she smiled. Even Zhao Ya's disposition and beauty seemed to pale before her.

Forcing himself to remain calm so as to not lose his bearings before the other party, Zhang Xuan asked, "Are you... a student of this academy?"

For some reason, he couldn't help but feel anxious and even a little lost before this lady. This was a feeling he had never felt from anyone before.

He was in the Master Teacher Academy due to clearing the entrance examination and becoming a student here. Since the other party was here as well, could it mean that she was a student too?

It would be great if that was the case. The thought of being able to spend many of the future days with the other party left him with a tinge of anticipation inside.

However, the young lady shook her head.

"No?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback. "Then... are you the kin of one of the elders here?"

There were strict rules in the Master Teacher Academy, and other than the students and the staff, no one else was allowed to step onto its premises.

If she wasn't a student of the academy, could it mean that she was the daughter or relative of one of the elders here? Otherwise, how could she possibly appear within the academy?

However, the young lady shook her head once more.

"Then..." Zhang Xuan scratched his head, and just as he was about to continue guessing, a faint but graceful voice sounded by

his ears.

"Follow me."

After which, the young lady before him began walking in a certain direction.

"You can speak..." Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He hadn't heard a word from the other party back when they were on the Verdant Mountain, so he'd thought that she was incapable of speech. Who would have thought that not only could she speak, her voice would be so moving as well?

"Of course I can!" The young lady rolled her eyes with a smile.

This fellow was truly a fool.

Back on Verdant Mountain, she had killed a ferocious spirit beast who had tyrannized the region, thus winning her the gratitude of countless other spirit beasts who resided in the area.

Therefore, those spirit beasts paid her a visit to express their gratitude, but in fear of disturbing her rest, they ended up gathering and lingering in her surroundings instead. Yet, that fellow had thought that she was under attack and forcefully pulled her down into the lake.

They ended up swimming underwater for a long period of time in an attempt to escape from the pursuit of the other spirit beasts.

Even at the very end, he thought that he had saved her life. He was truly a funny person.

But despite the misunderstanding, she knew that he had done it out of the goodwill of his heart. Considering his bravery in charging into an army of spirit beasts to 'save' her, she eventually chose not to point out the misunderstanding.

He had saved her once, and she had returned the favor by resolving the issue regarding his soul. With that, she'd thought that their fate had come to an end, and they would never meet

again. Who could have known that a day would come when they would meet once more?

"Are you a student here?" the young lady asked as they walked side by side.

"Yes, I am a freshman who have just arrived a few days ago. The last time we met at Huanyu Empire, I was actually just about to head here," Zhang Xuan replied.

"I see." The young lady nodded in realization.

So, he was a student here, no wonder she would see him here.

After a moment of silence as they walked amidst the crowd, the young lady suddenly asked, "Have you chosen your teacher yet?"

"Not yet... Actually, I have no intention of finding one at all." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"You don't intend to find a teacher?" The young lady was surprised. "Why?"

Master teachers who had enrolled here sought to further their capabilities and reach greater heights. The insights of a high-ranked master teacher were highly beneficial to one's progress as a master teacher, so why wouldn't one find a teacher?

"It's nothing much... I just haven't found a suitable teacher yet," Zhang Xuan replied with an awkward smile.

It was not that he intended to lie to the other party, but he dared not speak the truth. How could he say that the standard of teachers here was too low, such that their lessons were completely useless to him... If he were to really utter those words, he would be pummeled to death by both teachers and students alike in the next instant.

"What kind of teacher are you looking for? I might be able to help you on this matter," the young lady said.

Even though she didn't have much of an understanding of the

teachers in the academy, given her eye of discernment, she should be able to easily find a suitable teacher for him.

"This..." Zhang Xuan scratched his head in distress.

He had no intentions of acknowledging a teacher at all, so he wasn't too sure how he should respond to the other party's kind gesture.

After all, he had rejected even School Head Zhao and School Head Mo... How could any of the other teachers compare to them?

"I think that this teacher is not bad. His explanation of cultivation techniques is quite detailed, and he analyzes them in a systematic manner, starting from the basics before diving into the intricacies, making it easier for the students to comprehend the knowledge he is trying to impart."

There was yet another moment of silence between the duo before the young lady suddenly stopped before one of the platforms and gestured to an old man who was in the midst of lecturing a crowd.

Zhang Xuan glanced at the plaque hanging beside the old man and noted that he was from the Celestial Designer School.

Having to deal with complicated mechanisms every day, celestial designers tended to have logical and systematic minds. Such a trait seemed to be particularly useful in the impartation of knowledge too, as such lecturers would slowly build up their reasoning based on sound logic, as if cogs slowly placed into position to form a whole system. This made their lectures far easier to understand and much more memorable.

There were many freshmen gathered around him with agitated looks on their faces, seemingly intent on acknowledging him as their teacher.

However, while students had the right to choose their teacher, teachers were allowed to choose their students as well.

The more capable a teacher was, the more popular they would be

amongst the students.

Considering the old man's outstanding ability in imparting knowledge, there should be a significant number of freshmen who would apply to his tutelage. However, it remained to be seen how many he would accept.

"He is indeed a good teacher, but he isn't suitable for me..." Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Actually, you don't have to find a teacher for me. I don't intend to acknowledge a teacher for the time being. Let's talk about you instead. What's your name?"

"My name?"

The young lady was just about to reply when agitated exclamations suddenly sounded from the students around.

"I heard that a beautiful teacher has arrived in the academy, and she is going to hold her public lecture soon. Let's go and take a look!"

"What is there to look at? We are searching for a teacher, not a partner!"

"I heard that she is a master teacher dispatched here from the Qingyuan Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion to engage in experiential learning. Despite not even reaching twenty yet, she is already a 6-star master teacher, and even the Ten Great Master Teachers have to regard her with respect!"

"Is that true?"

"My uncle is a teacher here, and I heard this news straight from him! If we can acknowledge her as our teacher, we will surely be able to rise to great heights in the future!"

"If she truly is a teacher from the headquarters, her view must be much broader than ours. Right, what is her name? I don't think there is anyone who fits her profile from the Teacher Information Documentation I purchased earlier..."

"She is a new teacher in the academy, and not even the Ashen Moon Faction or the True Helios Faction has seen her yet, so naturally, they don't have any information on her. However, I did manage to get her name from my uncle. If I recall correctly, I think it is... Luo Ruoxin!"

"That is a beautiful name! Alright, I have decided! I shall go and listen to her public lecture..."

...

Amidst the bustle, many freshmen and seniors rushed forward excitedly, seemingly fearing that they wouldn't get a good spot if they were to be late.

"Beautiful teacher?" Seeing the excited crowd, Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless.

Just because a person was pretty didn't mean that they would be good at teaching.

"Let's head over as well!" Hearing the mutters from his surroundings, the young lady shook her head and made her way over as well.

"You wish to see the beautiful teacher as well?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

She was a lady herself, why would she be interested in the beautiful teacher too?

The young lady simply flashed Zhang Xuan a mysterious smile before proceeding ahead.

Zhang Xuan was bewildered, but he could only continue following behind the other party's back.

Soon, they arrived before a stage. By this point, a huge crowd had already gathered in the area.

An old man was currently standing on the stage, tidying it up.

This stage seemed to have been erected just a moment ago, and

unlike the other stages, it was completely empty except for a plaque that read "Luo Ruoxin".

"Where is the beautiful teacher? Why isn't she here? Are you sure there is no mistake in your information?"

"Mistake in my information? You must be joking! Do you see that elder on the stage? He is Elder Zhou from the Apothecary School!"

"Elder Zhou? Which Elder Zhou?"

"Which other elder has the surname of Zhou in the Apothecary School? Of course, it is Vice School Head Zhou!"

"Vice School Head Zhou is actually tidying up the stage personally for the new teacher?"

"It seems like the academy has a really high view of that Luo shi..."

...

Such discussions could be heard amidst the students.

"Vice School Head Zhou?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

Of the ten schools, the Apothecary School ranked at the top. Due to the standing of the Apothecary School, the various leaders of the school also held incredible prestige as well. For a vice school head of the Apothecary School to clean up the stage personally, it seemed that Luo shi was no ordinary master teacher.

Seeing Zhang Xuan's expression, the young lady beside him asked, "How is it? Are you interested in taking Luo shi as your teacher?"

"Not really." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"Why? There are so many people here who seem to be interested in her, why aren't you?" the young lady asked.

Even among two master teachers of the same rank, most would choose to acknowledge the one who had come from the

headquarters instead of the branch.

This was due to the difference in terms of worldly view.

Master teachers from the headquarters were likely to have come into contact with higher ranked master teachers themselves, and their understanding of cultivation tended to be much deeper than master teachers from the branches.

Take Luo Qiqi for example, even though she was only a 5-star apothecary as well, she was able to conduct a lesson for the other 5-star apothecaries in Huanyu Empire.

"Even if she is a good teacher, she can't possibly be better than me. Why should I acknowledge a person who can't even match up to me as my teacher?" Zhang Xuan said confidently.

So what if the other party had come from the headquarters?

Could the cultivation techniques she had learned be more detailed and aligned with nature than the Heaven's Path cultivation techniques?

That was impossible!

"Besides, even though the other students are calling her a beauty, I highly doubt that is the case. If she is truly as beautiful as the others claim her to be, why is she not here yet? Perhaps, she might even be hideous!" Zhang Xuan continued with a smile.

Even though he had never dated before, he knew better than to compliment another woman before the lady he fancied. Otherwise, he could very well incur her ire.

Besides, he thought that beauty was just a marketing means for that Luo shi.

To master teachers, one's appearance was nothing more than a facade. What was truly important was their capability.

Most likely, the issue regarding Luo shi's beauty might just be an attempt by the academy to draw more students to her public

lecture so as to win her goodwill.

It wasn't like such a matter hadn't happened before.

"Hideous?" The eyes of the young lady narrowed into slits.

"That's right. Don't worry, you will see once she appears..." Zhang Xuan nodded confidently.

Just as he was about to continue, Elder Zhou on the stage suddenly caught sight of something and his eyes lit up. He hurriedly flew over and clasped his fist toward the young lady standing beside Zhang Xuan.

"Luo shi, you are here! We have already prepared the stage for you..."

"Alright." The young lady nodded before turning to Zhang Xuan with an unreadable smile. "You said that I am hideous, right?"

"Y-you are... Luo Ruoxin, Luo shi?"

Zhang Xuan's body stiffened as his eyes bulged from their sockets. "You aren't a student... but a teacher?"

This is the final chapter of the arc 【You Are A Teacher?】~

This first half of the year really has been a difficult one for me. As some might know, I am working on another novel known as The Records of the Human Emperor on Gravitytales, and along with Library of Heaven's Path, I had to post three chapters on a daily basis, which is quite tough for me while having to juggle my other work.

I ended up burning through every last one of my stockpile, and even after leaving the other novel on hiatus, I am still barely scraping through the days. Hopefully I will be able to build a sizeable stockpile for me to last the next semester.

Anyway, back to the story, I saw many saying that there isn't much story progression recently. I have to admit that the earlier parts of the story are more of like the 【Daily Life of Zhang Xuan】,

which I honestly believe is pretty interesting in itself too, but there will be more progression later on, especially as he gradually approaches the top of the Master Teacher Continent.

It kind of feels like the crux of this arc is 【Zhang Xuan found his first love】, which is kind of sad (he did live two lives) and happy at the same time. He is pretty much invincible in everything else, so I wonder if he will be invincible in love too hmmm. Anyway, I think this is the first time Zhang Xuan has been face-slapped

Anyway, the next arc will be 【Zhang laoshi's Students】, or Teacher Zhang's Students.

Chapter 762 Library of Heaven's Path

Upgraded (1)

Zhang Xuan was flabbergasted.

He'd thought that the young lady who seemed to be of the same age as him would be a student of this academy, but who would have thought that she was a teacher dispatched from the headquarter!

It was just a moment ago that he'd said that the teacher dispatched from the headquarters would be hideous when it turned out to be the young lady he was interested in... He couldn't help but fidget awkwardly.

If the young lady before him could be considered hideous, there would be no one in the world who was deserving of the word "pretty".

Even though her disguise had dulled her ravishing features, her ethereal disposition and elegant bearing still shone through, making it impossible from anyone to avert his gaze from her.

Looking at the silly fellow before her panicking, Luo Ruoxin chuckled before turning around and leaping onto the stage.

"How beautiful!"

"With such appearance, she must be the top beauty of our academy!"

"Top beauty? That student over there, you must be joking. I am from the Bewitching Devil Faction, and I can tell you that Sister Yaoyao is the most beautiful of them all!"

"That's just your own opinion. In my view, Senior Dongxin is the prettiest!"

"I still think that Princess Fei-er is the best. The other seniors are way out of our league, at least I might still stand a chance with

Princess Fei-er..."

"You wish to woo Princess Fei-er? Dream on! Haven't you heard how long Xing Yuan has courted her for? Honestly speaking, I am still the most entranced by Luo Qiqi's charms, but it's a pity that she isn't interested in me at all..."

...

Upon seeing Luo Ruoxin, a huge commotion broke out beneath.

The rumors regarding the appearance of a new beautiful teacher had drawn many seniors here as well. In an instant, excited discussions sounded amidst the huge crowd.

There were plenty of beauties in the academy as well, and there was even an unofficial ranking list made on them.

However, every individual had their own fancy, so the seat regarding the top still remained contentious.

"I am Luo Ruoxin, a new teacher of Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy!"

Paying no heed to the discussions below, Luo Ruoxin began introducing herself. Her voice carried some kind of entrancing property that immediately silenced the bustle below.

"The topic of my lecture will be how a cultivator can establish harmony between his body and soul in the Consonant Spirit realm.

"It is at the Consonant Spirit realm that a cultivator will start cultivating their soul, and any mistake made in one's cultivation at this point can potentially create a rift between one's soul and one's body, limiting one's strength..."

After listening for a moment, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but be impressed.

As expected of a master teacher from the headquarters! The content was simple, but accurate and concise. Even he could not find any problem with it.

No wonder the other party could easily resolve the issue regarding the incompatibility between his body and soul. Her understanding regarding the soul and body could be said to be on par with his.

And that was an incredible feat.

Zhang Xuan possessed the Library of Heaven's Path, and he had gathered innumerable books so as to compile the perfected Heaven's Path Divine Art. Yet, the other party's level of understanding was actually equal to his... It seemed that Luo Ruoxin wasn't just an ordinary 6-star master teacher. Most probably, she was under the guidance of a high-rank master teacher as well.

Otherwise, it was impossible for her to have analyzed the Consonant Spirit realm so thoroughly.

Soon, the lecture came to an end.

"I'll be stopping the lecture here. Last but not least, if you wish to become my student, you just have to clear my test. If you fail it, I won't accept you!" Luo Ruoxin waved her hand.

"Test? What kind of test?"

"We beseech Luo shi to elaborate more on the matter..."

It was only at this point that everyone finally awoke from the entranced stupor they were in. They understood that if they could take the other party as their teacher, they would be able to advance their cultivation, and their eyes were gleaming with anticipation.

"Simple, it's memorizing books! If anyone can memorize 10,000 books within two hours, I will accept them as my student!" Luo Ruoxin replied.

"10,000 books?" Hearing those words, everyone nearly fainted on the spot.

Even with their photographic memory, memorizing two

thousand books or so was already the limit. Ten thousand books... They wouldn't even have the time to flip through all of the books, so how could they memorize all of them?

They might still be able to give it a try if the test had been on something else, but this... it was clearly impossible!

"With such a test... will she be able to get even a single student?" Zhang Xuan also fell into a daze.

He could easily memorize ten thousand books through the Library of Heaven's Path, but it would be a difficult feat even for him if he had to do it manually.

For one, he could be spared the additional time spent on flipping through the books in the Library of Heaven's Path, allowing him to go through the content swiftly. On top of that, his mind could process information far faster in the Library of Heaven's Path as well, allowing him to memorize ten thousand books within two hours easily. But without it... it was doubtful if even the Ten Great Master Teachers were capable of such a feat.

Thus, to bring up such conditions... that could only mean that Luo Ruoxin had no interest in accepting any students whatsoever.

"Elder Zhou, I will be troubling you to deal with this matter..."

Leaving behind those words, Luo Ruoxin leaped off the stage with a light smile and headed toward Zhang Xuan. "Let's go."

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded, and the duo walked away.

"Who is that fellow?"

"It seems like he is a freshman!"

"A freshman? How did that freshmen get to know Luo shi? Furthermore, from the looks of it, it seems like they have quite a close relationship?"

"What is going on..."

"Why can't it be me in his place? In what way am I inferior to

him?"

"That person is... Zhang shi? As expected of the most outstanding man amongst us freshman, he is able to even seduce that beautiful teacher..."

"What do you mean by seduce? You are speaking as if Zhang shi has gotten together with her through unscrupulous means! That's called flirting, alright!"

...

Seeing Luo shi leaving with a freshman, there were many seniors who clenched their fists in anger, furious that they weren't in that freshman's place. On the other hand, the remaining freshmen looked upon the sight with eyes gleaming in excitement, as if someone had done them proud.

But regardless of their reactions, Zhang Xuan and Luo Ruoxin walked straight out of the crowd without paying them any heed. Soon, they were strolling along the lakeside of the academy.

The scent of spring filled the air. A slight breeze blew, and the verdant greenery along the lake danced lightly to it.

The brilliant rays of the sun struck the surface of the lake, evoking a beautiful gleam on it.

Zhang Xuan slowly walked alongside Luo Ruoxin. Even though there was nothing but silence between them, he felt the utmost tranquility in his heart.

The various happenings over the past half a year replayed in his head...

The time he had spent as a teacher in Tianxuan Kingdom, when he accepted his first few students and imparted knowledge to them...

The time when he challenged the master teacher examination in Tianwu Kingdom and met Lu Chong in the midst of it...

The time when he stomped into Xuanyuan Kingdom and challenged the entire kingdom by himself...

The time when he resided in the Myriad Kingdom Alliance and clinched the champion seat in the Master Teacher Tournament...

The time when he accidentally caused some trouble at the Cleansing Lake in Huanyu Empire, venturing into the underground chamber where they believed Wu Yangzi resided in, and meeting the young lady beside him...

In his long journey, his cultivation had advanced from Zhenqi realm all the way to Cosmos Bridge realm.

His Soul Depth had also been raised from the initial 0.1 to the current 19.1, putting him on par with even 6-star master teachers.

The various figures he had met in his journey flashed across his mind as well.

Liu shi, Zhuang shi, Kang shi, Mo shi...

Zhao Ya, Lu Xun, Lu Chong, Shen Bi Ru, Mo Yu...

Be they acquaintances, students, or friends, they were all a part of his life, and they had all played a role in making him who he was.

The various knowledge he had acquired in his time also flashed through his mind... Apothecary, painter, beast tamer, poison master...

Hong long!

Just as these memories were floating in his head, he suddenly felt an intense rumbling in the Library of Heaven's Path in his mind, and it was growing more and more intense as time passed.

What is happening? Zhang Xuan's eyes widened in fluster.

The Library of Heaven's Path was his greatest weapon that he could fall back on in dire times. Did something go wrong with it?

However, there wasn't even time for him to think the matter through. With his mind on the verge of exploding, the sight before him grew blurrier and blurrier. Eventually, his body swayed weakly and 'putong!', he collapsed to the ground.

Before losing consciousness altogether, he seemed to see Luo Ruoxin rushing over toward him and remarking, "Why is he fainting again? Is his body that weak..."

Weak?

Zhang Xuan felt like crying at this very moment.

The previous time he'd fainted was primarily due to the incompatibility between his soul and body, and this time, his Library of Heaven's Path was suddenly acting up for no apparent reason...

I am really not weak, it is just a coincidence!

Not only am I not weak, I am very fit as well. Trust me!

However, before Zhang Xuan could utter those words, his consciousness had already faded to an endless abyss of darkness...

...

An unknown period of time later, Zhang Xuan finally roused from his temporary coma.

Opening his eyes abruptly, he realized that he was lying on the bed in his Elite Sector residence.

Following which, Zhang Xuan suddenly heard an excited voice, and a beautiful lady with a flawless complexion came into sight.

"Teacher, you are finally awake..."

"Little Qi, why are you here?" Zhang Xuan asked in surprise.

The person before him was no other than the student whom he had accepted back at Huanyu Empire, Luo Qiqi!

After leaving the underground chamber, they had left for

Hongyuan City together. However, after reaching the city, they had separated as Zhang Xuan headed for the Academic Sea to liaise with Hong shi and the others while Luo Qiqi returned back to the academy to report on the progress of their mission.

"I heard from School Head Zhao that you are currently residing in the Elite Sector, so I came over to look for you. However, on my way there, I saw you fainted by the lake, so I carried you here," Luo Qiqi answered.

"I fainted by the lake? Then..." Zhang Xuan frowned.

"You wish to ask about Luo shi, is that right? She was beside you when I arrived, and she took a look at your condition and said that you were fine before entrusting you to me," Luo Qiqi replied.

"Entrusted me to you? So, she has already left?" Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel a little disappointed within upon hearing that news.

But giving it some thought, they were nothing more than acquaintances who had a prior encounter before enrolling in the academy. The other party had no obligation to send him back to his residence.

Besides, she was currently a teacher, and he was currently a student. Regardless of the reason, it wouldn't be appropriate for them to get too intimate with one another. Otherwise, it would reflect badly on both him and her if malicious rumors regarding them were to start spreading.

"That's right. I heard that Luo shi only arrived in the academy yesterday, how does teacher know her?" Luo Qiqi asked out of curiosity.

Based on what she had heard thus far, Luo shi was a master teacher dispatched here from the headquarters. It was only yesterday that Mu shi arrived in the Master Teacher Academy together with her, and before that, Zhang shi had been together

with them at Huanyu Empire. Thus, it seemed unlikely for them to know one another!

"How do I know her? It's just a coincidence... Right, the both of you share the same surname. Is there any chance that you knew one another before this?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Luo Ruoxin and Luo Qiqi shared the same character in their surname—Luo.

At the same time, they were also extraordinarily beautiful ladies as well. Could they be related with one another?

"There are many people out there who possess the Luo surname; you are thinking too much into it!" Luo Qiqi couldn't help but chuckle at that deduction as she shook her head.

Her teacher had always been a rather intelligent person, why would he suddenly ask such a silly question?

Considering the immense size of the Master Teacher Continent, there should at least be a few hundred million people in the world who possessed the surname 'Luo'. What were the odds of two people possessing the 'Luo' surname being related?

"That's true." Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

It was only in the spur of the moment that he'd asked the question, and he hadn't thought too much into it.

"How long have I been out for?" Zhang Xuan asked as he sat up from his bed.

"Around three days!" Luo Qiqi replied.

"Three days?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

He was also out for three days the previous time. Why did it seem as if he was fainting more and more regularly recently, and for three whole days at that?

"That's right. The three-day period for students to acknowledge their teacher is already over." Luo Qiqi shook her head with a

bitter smile on her face.

Her teacher had truly fainted at an untimely moment. These three days should have been crucial to the future of the freshmen, but he ended up sleeping through it.

Chapter 763 Library of Heaven's Path

Upgraded (2)

However, based on what she knew about her teacher, it shouldn't be a huge issue.

Since he had rejected even Elder Mo and Elder Zhao, there should be no other person in the academy who would worthy of becoming his teacher.

"I see."

As expected, after hearing her words, the young man before her shook his head, but it didn't seem like he was too affected by the issue. Instead, he seemed to be more worried about his acquaintance instead. "So... how many students did Luo shi eventually take in?"

"If I recall correctly, Luo shi didn't take in a single student at all. The requirement she set was simply too strict. Memorizing ten thousand books within two hours is an impossible feat!" Luo Qiqi shook her head.

"She didn't take in a single student?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

Since she was a teacher of the academy, why didn't she take in a single student?

"Yes. I am not too sure what is going on, but this matter had everyone baffled," Luo Qiqi replied.

According to the rumors, Luo Ruoxin had been dispatched to Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy by the headquarters for experiential training, so she should have accepted a few students in order to complete her training. But if that was the case, why did she set such strict requirements?

It was as if she was uninterested in accepting any students at all!

After pondering for a moment, Zhang Xuan eventually shook his

head and said, "I will ask her about it when I get the chance to."

Putting Luo Ruoxin's issue aside, Zhang Xuan's attention finally fell on Qiqi, and with just a single glance, he was startled. "You have made a breakthrough?"

The previous time he met her, Luo Qiqi was at Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle, the cream of the crop of the Grade-2 students. Yet, in just a few days, she had made the breakthrough to Transcendent Mortal 7-dan Perfect Harmonization realm!

"Yes, it is all teacher's credit. As a reward for the mission, I received School Head Zhao's Meridian and Bone Cleansing, allowing me to overcome my previous bottleneck!" Luo Qiqi smiled.

If not for the Meridian and Bone Cleansing from School Head Zhao, even though she was already at Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle, it would have still taken her several months or even an entire year in order to take the next step forward.

Beyond Consonant Spirit realm, one had to not only accumulate sufficient zhenqi but nourish one's soul as well in order to make a breakthrough. It was often the latter that was more troublesome, requiring long periods of time just to increase it the tiniest bit.

As a result, there were many Grade-2 students who were stuck at Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle, unable to make the final step forward.

However, in the Meridian and Bone Cleansing, not only had School Head Zhao purified her zhenqi, he had also tempered her soul, thus allowing her to make the breakthrough instantaneously.

Yu Fei-er, Xing Yuan, Wu Zhen, and Ye Qian had also benefitted greatly from the Meridian and Bone Cleansing as well.

"My credit?" Zhang Xuan blinked.

Why was this his credit? And what did this have to do with School Head Zhao?

"Did Teacher forget about the mission at the underground chamber? You saved us and helped us retrieve Elder Wu Yangzi's body. That's a huge contribution to the Blacksmith School!" Luo Qiqi explained.

"Ahh..."

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan suddenly understood why Yuan Hong's attitude toward him abruptly changed after paying a visit to the school head's office.

At this point, Luo Qiqi suddenly bowed deeply and said, "Teacher, I apologize for handing the Zither Forging Technique to the Blacksmith School without your approval, I ask of you to punish me..."

She had only managed to obtain the Zither Forging Technique manual with her teacher's assistance, but without the latter's approval, she had handed it over to the school.

"You are the one who inherited Wu Yangzi's heritage; you can do whatever you want with it. Besides, the best way for the Zither Forging Technique to shine is through handing it over to School Head Zhao, so I believe that your decision was the right one as well," Zhang Xuan said.

Luo Qiqi was the one who had become Wu Yangzi's student, so it was only right for the technique to belong to her. In this respect, it wouldn't be right for Zhang Xuan to dictate what she could do with it.

"Thank you, Teacher!"

Even though Luo Qiqi knew that her teacher would agree to it, she didn't expect him to approve of her actions immediately. After all, the Zither Forging Technique was an incredibly valuable smithing technique which many were dying to lay their hands on. His magnanimity was indeed worthy of respect.

After chatting for a moment longer, Luo Qiqi suddenly recalled

something and said, "Teacher, regarding the matter of Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence, I tried looking into it and there was someone who claimed that she knew where it was. I made an appointment with her tonight, and it is going to be time soon. I will have to head over to meet her."

"Tonight?" Zhang Xuan glanced at the window outside, and only then did he realize that the sun was beginning to set beyond the western horizon, and the sky was beginning to dim.

"I see. Let me grab some food first, and I will accompany you to the meeting," Zhang Xuan said after some contemplation.

The three days of sleeping had already emptied out whatever that was in his stomach.

"I knew that Teacher would be hungry, so I prepared some food!" Luo Qiqi chuckled as she flicked her wrist, and a huge spread materialized before her.

"Thank you!"

Looking at the delicacies before him, Zhang Xuan's appetite was whetted, and he immediately dived into action.

While stuffing his mouth, he made use of this opportunity to immerse his consciousness into the Library of Heaven's Path.

The reason he'd fainted three days ago was due to the rumbling in the Library of Heaven's Path. Since he had woken up, it was imperative that he should check what had happened to it.

As soon as his consciousness entered the Library of Heaven's Path, he froze.

This... Something is different about it...

Previously, the Library of Heaven's Path had been a large hall with towering shelves filled with books, expanding all the way to the horizon. The basic layout was still the same, but somehow, it felt larger, as if the ceiling and shelves were taller than before, and

the area had become more spacious.

It seemed like the rumbling had caused several changes in the Library of Heaven's Path. Not only had it grown larger, it had also become much more majestic and grander.

Looking at it from afar, one couldn't help but feel intense pressure on one's soul.

The Library of Heaven's Path felt like a moon reflected in the water before, ethereal and transient. At this very moment, however, it felt palpable, as if it was a real library standing before him.

"The Library of Heaven's Path seems to have materialized further, but... what is the use of it?" Zhang Xuan muttered doubtfully.

He stepped forward and attempted to grab one of the books on the shelves, but just like before, his hand simply slipped through it.

In other words, even though the books seemed much more tangible than before, they were still illusory. They could be seen but not touched.

"Where are the books I have gathered before?" Zhang Xuan mumbled as he walked around the library.

Fortunately, he soon arrived at a section where the books he had gathered previously were. It seemed like they hadn't disappeared due to the changes in the Library of Heaven's Path.

Walking up to them, he casually grabbed one and began flipping through it.

Huala!

With the flipping of the books, the sight before Zhang Xuan blurred as the content of the book dove straight into his mind, etching itself onto it.

This... Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in astonishment.

Even when reading in the Library of Heaven's Path previously, he'd needed to read the words one by one in order to memorize them. But at this instant, he was able to memorize the content of the book just by flipping through the pages!

After several tries, he had verified the matter. As long as he picked up a book with the intention to read it, the content would automatically imprint itself onto his mind, sparing him from the additional effort of reading it.

This is great... I will be able to pick up my reading pace in the future! Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in agitation.

It seemed like along with the renovation in the Library of Heaven's Path, he had also gained an additional ability!

With his newfound ability, he could easily cover several hundred thousand books in the Library of Heaven's Path within two hours!

In the future, he wouldn't need to waste the hard-earned golden pages on assimilating the knowledge within the books anymore.

My pace of reading has quickened... Is it possible that my other abilities might have been enhanced as well? Zhang Xuan thought.

He swiftly extracted his consciousness from his mind and glanced at the chicken drumstick he was currently tearing the flesh out of.

"Flaws!" he muttered.

A book appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path, and he swiftly rushed to flip through it.

The thigh of Spirit Beast Boneless Chicken. Cooked by Master Gourmet Wu Bushui of Drunken Heart Tavern using 47 different spices and herbs...

It took him just an instant to read through the entire book.

Nothing has changed at all! Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

Just like before, the flaws regarding the dish were compiled in the book. There didn't seem to be any additional ability regarding this.

Hmm, I should try it on some other objects to verify the matter. Perplexed, Zhang Xuan turned his sight to the bookshelf before him.

The residences in the Elite Sector were filled with all kinds of amenities that one might require. There were bookshelves filled with books in the residence as well. However, they weren't cultivation technique manuals but books on the geography and culture of Hongyuan City.

Zhang Xuan was just about to stand up and make his way to the bookshelf when a thought suddenly came to his mind. Thus, he sat down back down and muttered, "Flaws!"

Hu!

A book appeared in his mind.

This...

He was only giving it a try out of curiosity, not holding much hope that it would work, but it actually did! A book had really appeared! He swiftly dived into the Library of Heaven's Path to flip through the book.

It was a replica of the book which he had intended to take in earlier.

He experimented a few more times, and the excited gleam in his eyes intensified.

It seems like I can gather books in the Library of Heaven's Path without touching them...

Previously, the only way for him to gather a book was to touch it with his hands. However, with his newfound ability, he could compile books just by laying his eyes on them and willing it.

In other words, gone were the days where he had to run frenziedly in libraries to gather books!

Recalling those embarrassing days where he had been caught running about in the various libraries, he couldn't help but feel a little moved within.

And more importantly, his efficiency to gather books had also been boosted immensely!

Does this ability apply to other objects as well? Zhang Xuan wondered.

He had only experimented with books so far, and he was curious to see if this ability was extended to other items as well. To his disappointment, however, it didn't work on other items.

It seemed like his newfound ability only worked on books at the moment. He could gather books just by laying his eyes on them, but as for artifacts and other items, he still had to lay his hands on them in order to find their flaws.

Frustrated, he shook his head.

He had gotten excited over nothing.

If he could discover the flaws of other objects without touching them, he would be spared a lot of trouble, and his ability would be far more versatile as well.

Perhaps it was due to the Library of Heaven's Path having yet to reach the required level or an innate flaw in the heavens itself, but he simply couldn't realize the ability at the moment.

Or maybe I am just lacking practice, I should give it a few more tries just to be sure...

The indignation Zhang Xuan felt made him unwilling to give up, and he began experimenting once again.

And while he was busy experimenting with his abilities, Luo Qiqi, who was sitting beside him, was stunned.

She had bought a table full of delicacies for her teacher to enjoy, but the latter... One moment, he would pick up a chicken thigh, stare deeply into it, and shake his head in disappointment. The next moment, he would look around the room, stare intensely at another object he'd laid his eyes upon, and clench his fists in excitement.

It was as if those items were his friends. Countless different expressions flickered across his face as he lay their eyes on them, be it melancholy, graveness, relaxed, excitement, delight, frustration...

Could he have gone bonkers due to the coma? Or did he lose a part of his soul somewhere?

Surely a normal person would express so many emotions not toward a chicken thigh but her, right?

No matter what, she was one of the most beautiful ladies in the academy. Yet, she couldn't even hold a candle to the charm of a chicken thigh?

Just as she was sighing deeply, she saw her teacher stretching his other hand forward to tear another chicken thigh before staring at both thighs even more intently.

It was as if he was responding to her doubts. If one chicken thigh wasn't enough, how about two?

"..." Luo Qiqi.

Chapter 764 Hu Yaoyao

It took a while before Zhang Xuan was finally done 'inspecting' the chicken thighs and put them down.

It seemed like, for objects other than a book, laying his sight on them wasn't enough. He still had to come into physical contact with them in order to collect their information in the Library of Heaven's Path.

Nevertheless, it is good enough that I am able to gather and read books faster than before! Zhang Xuan thought in satisfaction.

It was embarrassing that a noble master teacher like him had been forced to run around in the library in order to collect books in the past. With the newly upgraded Library of Heaven's Path, he would be able to remain graceful while taking in new knowledge.

Soon, he completed his meal and stood up. "I'm done. Let's go!"

Back at the underground chamber where Wu Yangzi had been imprisoned before his demise, he had said that he had left his most important heritage and treasure at the Three Stars of the Earth Dragon. However, it had been two thousand years since his passing, and putting aside whatever the Three Stars of the Earth Dragon was, even finding his old residence was a huge trouble in itself.

Luo Qiqi had been looking into the matter ever since her return, and in the past two days, while she was taking care of the unconscious Zhang Xuan, she'd happened to receive some clues to the matter.

"Alright." Luo Qiqi nodded.

As they were walking out of the residence, they suddenly saw a young lady standing before the door, seemingly intending to knock on it. Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, she quickly clasped her fist and bowed. "Zhang shi!"

"Ran Xiaoxiao?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

It was the person who had challenged him back when he'd first received the keys to the residence, as well as the second runner-up in the Grade-1 Annual Tournament.

She had challenged him to a duel of Impartation of Heaven's Will, only to end up falling under his control and defeating the first runner-up Wu Chan and third runner-up Xiao Nan in his stead.

"Yes, I came here to thank Zhang shi for your guidance..." Ran Xiaoxiao smiled.

Initially, she was extremely displeased to hear that a freshman was going to take up the first residence available to Grade-1, which was also the reason why she'd marched up to his residence upon hearing the news and challenged him to a duel. Yet, the other party had been able to point out the various flaws in her cultivation directly, and it was then that she'd realized the gap between her and the other party.

Under the other party's guidance, she'd been able to overcome her bottleneck, achieving a long-awaited breakthrough in her cultivation. Out of excitement, she'd rushed to his residence in order to express her gratitude. At the same time, she had also heard some worrying news, so she came over to enquire about it as well.

"There is no need to stand on ceremony. We are fellow students, so it's only right for us to help one another." Zhang Xuan waved his hands casually.

"If not for Zhang shi's guidance, I would still be stuck at my previous bottleneck, unable to take a step forward in my cultivation..." Ran Xiaoxiao was just about to bow deeply to express her gratitude once more when she suddenly caught sight of the figure beside Zhang Xuan and widened her eyes. "Senior Qiqi?"

She had been too excited to see Zhang Xuan earlier on that she'd neglected the person who was standing behind him. To her astonishment, it was the most famous Grade-2 senior of the academy, Luo Qiqi!

Luo Qiqi nodded in response to her.

Ran Xiaoxiao was one of the top five geniuses of the Grade-1 students, so it was natural that Luo Qiqi had heard of her as well.

"You two..." Ran Xiaoxiao blinked rapidly in shock.

Luo Qiqi was extremely famous in the Master Teacher Academy, not just because of her incredible talent or her beautiful features, but more importantly, it was said that she had an extraordinary background as well.

She was known to be very diligent, spending most of her time studying and cultivating. Thus, she rarely had any interactions with the opposite sex. Why would she be in Zhang shi's residence?

On top of that, the sun had already disappeared beyond the horizon, and darkness had set into the sky. For two people of the opposite gender to meet under the same roof in the middle of the night... What could they be up to?

"I am learning pill forging from Zhang shi. He is my teacher!" Luo Qiqi replied.

"Teacher?" Ran Xiaoxiao widened her eyes in disbelief upon hearing those words.

Zhang shi is just a Grade-1 student in the academy, and on top of that, he only arrived a few days ago. For a Grade-2 genius like you to acknowledge him as your teacher...

Not to mention, you are also one of the school belles! If word spreads, won't a riot occur amongst the men of the academy?

"If you are here to thank me, there is really no need for it. As fellow master teachers, we should help each other wherever we

can." Not wanting to be delayed here, Zhang Xuan waved his hand as he prepared to leave with Luo Qiqi.

"AH!" Hearing those words, Ran Xiaoxiao suddenly recalled the other reason she was there, and she quickly spoke up. "Actually, there is another matter I need to talk to Zhang shi about."

"Oh?"

"Over the last few days, as I was walking around the academy, I heard some news... The student populace is saying that you have offended quite a few student factions, and it seems they are going to coordinate with one another to deal with you!" Ran Xiaoxiao said worriedly.

"I offended the student factions? When did I?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

He did refuse to purchase the Teacher Information Documentation from the factions back then... but surely, they wouldn't be that offended over such a small matter?

Besides, it should be his freedom to decide whether he would buy something or not. For student factions consisting of master teachers to band together against him over such a small matter, that was plain ridiculous.

"You didn't offend them?" Seeing the confusion on the other party's face, Ran Xiaoxiao shook her head. "These student factions spend the entire year gathering information on each teacher in order to compile them into a book so as to sell them to the freshmen... However, their business ended up being foiled by Zhang shi, and their morals were even questioned for their doings. How could they possibly not be angry?"

"I foiled their business?" Zhang Xuan scratched his head in confusion. "But I didn't do anything at all!"

What the heck did I foil?

I have been unconscious the past three days, so what could I have

possibly done? Or are you saying that I actually sleepwalked and did something that even I am unaware of?

"You didn't do anything?" Ran Xiaoxiao sighed deeply in frustration. "Does Zhang shi know the freshmen Jun Ruohuan, Song Chao, and Luo Xuan?"

"I do," Zhang Xuan replied.

"The three of them have distributed their own version of the Teacher Information Documentation in your name for free, and the content of the book has been shown to be even more detailed and accurate than those sold by the other student factions... This has caused a huge uproar amongst both the freshmen and seniors alike," Ran Xiaoxiao said.

"They distributed the Teacher Information Documentation for free?" Zhang Xuan's eyelids began twitching uncontrollably.

That explained everything!

It was out of goodwill for the trio that he'd compiled a version of the Teacher Information Documentation based on the information he had gathered from the others so that they could better choose their teacher, but those fellows actually distributed them freely to the other freshmen! Not to mention, they even used his name!

While the other factions were selling theirs at a hundred middle-tier spirit stones each, they were giving them away for free, and their version was even more accurate at that... That was practically spoiling the market. Of course they would incur the ire of others!

However, it was unlikely that Jun Ruohuan and the others were intentionally trying to screw him over. Most likely, they were just intending to build up a good reputation for him amidst the student populace, just that they failed to think the matter through. As a result, they ended up offending most of the student factions.

"Once a freshman offends the student factions, he will find himself hindered throughout the academy. Zhang shi, you must be

careful... If things really come down to it, it might be necessary for you to consider joining a powerful student faction so as to come under their protection," Ran Xiaoxiao advised.

She was a member of a student faction as well, so she was conflicted for a moment after hearing the news. But eventually, she still decided to inform Zhang Xuan of this issue.

Zhang Xuan might be powerless against the student factions as an individual, but if he could come under the umbrella of one of the more formidable factions, it would be harder for the other factions to do anything to him.

"Thank you!" Knowing that the other party had chosen to inform him of this matter at the risk of falling out with her faction, Zhang Xuan thanked her earnestly.

To be honest, while it might be troublesome, he didn't really fear the student factions.

After all, from the start of his journey from Tianxuan Kingdom until now, there was no lack of people he had offended.

If they knew what was good for them, they would learn to stay out of his way. Otherwise, he didn't mind showing them his true prowess.

Even the boss of the Spirit Emporium was nearly driven insane by him, let alone a couple of students.

"I will be taking my leave then." After saying all that needed to be said, Ran Xiaoxiao clasped her fist and left.

"Those student factions are troublesome to deal with. Teacher, you must be careful!" Luo Qiqi said with a frown as she watched Ran Xiaoxiao's departing back.

Having spent several years in the Master Teacher Academy, she had seen plenty of the filthy doings of those student factions. If they were to really put their mind to it, they could even force a student to retire voluntarily in just a single day.

This was the reason those without backing or power had to join a student faction. Otherwise, they would be too vulnerable to survive in the academy.

"I understand." Knowing that the other party was saying those words for his sake, Zhang Xuan nodded.

Luo Qiqi was worried, but considering how Zhang Xuan had School Head Mo and School Head Zhao's protection, those student factions shouldn't dare to act too brazenly. Thus, she decided not to think too much into it.

The duo walked along the streets, and soon, they arrived at a gazebo beside the lake.

"This is the location I have agreed on with the other party," Luo Qiqi said as she came to a halt.

"Who is it? Are they a student of the academy?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"I am not too sure either. I sent the request at the Succor Tower, and someone responded to me. We made an appointment to meet here. Unfortunately, there are no additional details regarding the other party's profile," Luo Qiqi replied.

"I see." Zhang Xuan nodded.

The academy's Succor Tower was a place where the students or even teachers could post requests such as to seek assistance on certain subjects they were unsure of or to help them with a certain problem in exchange of certain rewards. Often, the reward tended to be Academic Credits.

In a sense, it worked in a similar fashion to the Wall of Dilemma in the Physician Guilds.

It had been two thousand years since Wu Yangzi had disappeared, and the map of Hongyuan City had also changed significantly over the years. Without any additional assistance, it would take forever for them to track down the location of his old

residence. Thus, Luo Qiqi decided to post a request at the Succor Tower, promising Academic Credits in exchange.

She'd thought that it would take quite a long period of time before she could receive an answer, but who would have thought that she would receive a response on the third day?

However, as the identities of respondents and responders were kept anonymous by the Succor Tower, it was impossible for her to know who the other party was. Nevertheless, considering that they were in the academy, the other party should either be a student or a teacher.

"Let's wait a little longer then," Zhang Xuan said.

At that moment, a breeze suddenly blew, and a figure abruptly emerged from the darkness of the night.

Under the dim illumination of the stars, one could barely make out the silhouette of a lady. She was tall, but what particularly stood out was her slender waist, which one could easily wrap around with a single hand.

But despite her slender waist, she had a curvaceous figure which would send the hearts of males running in agitation.

Hu!

Soon, the figure landed in the gazebo.

Finally, Luo Qiqi managed to catch sight of the other party's appearance.

She was a young lady in her late twenties. Just like Yu Fei-er and Luo Qiqi, she had a beautiful face with distinctive features, but unlike the duo, she commanded a bewitching air around her.

"Senior Yaoyao?" Taken aback, Luo Qiqi quickly clasped her fist and greeted her.

"Oh, so it's you!" Recognizing Luo Qiqi and well, Hu Yaoyao asked curiously, "Are you the one who is seeking out Wu Yangzi's old

residence?"

"That's right." Luo Qiqi nodded. "Do you have any news regarding that?"

"I do know something about it!" Hu Yaoyao nodded.

Hearing the other party's confirmation, Luo Qiqi clenched her fists tightly in agitation. However, at that moment, she suddenly caught sight of the look of confusion on her teacher's face, so she quickly filled him in. "Teacher, she is a Grade-5 student from our academy, Senior Hu Yaoyao!"

"Hu Yaoyao?" Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

Hu Yaoyao, Luo Qiqi, Ran Xiaoxiao...

Was this a trend in the academy? Why did all of the ladies he had met had such names?

"You don't know me?" Seeing the confused look of the young man before her, Hu Yaoyao was perplexed. She walked up to him, and with an entrancing smile, she asked, "What's your name?"

"Me?" For some reason, Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before replying earnestly, "I am Xuanxuan!"

Chapter 765 Negotiations

"Pu!" Luo Qiqi nearly fainted on the spot.

However, with her sharp wits, she swiftly understood what kind of bizarre thoughts were in her teacher's mind, and a helpless smile appeared on her face.

Her teacher was a person of great capability, but sometimes, his thoughts tended to be eccentric.

"Xuanxuan?" Hu Yaoyao asked, bewildered by the bizarre name she was hearing.

Fearing that the other party might misunderstand his intentions, Luo Qiqi quickly replied, "He is my apothecary teacher, Zhang Xuan!"

"Zhang Xuan? So, you are the freshman who wrecked the business of our student factions?" Hearing that familiar name, Hu Yaoyao suddenly recalled something, and a glint flashed across her eyes.

A chilling smile emerged on her flawless face as she examined the young man before her, determined to see what it was about him that dealt such a heavy blow to the finances of so many student factions at once.

Ever since the establishment of the Master Teacher Academy, there had never been a freshman who had caused such a huge uproar in the academy before, resulting in nearly all of the student factions incurring huge losses.

However, no matter how she looked at the young man before him, he had an honest face and an earnest gaze, completely unlike how the rumors made him out to be. She couldn't help but feel a little surprised.

Hu Yaoyao turned to Luo Qiqi and asked, "You just said that... he is your apothecary teacher? What is going on?"

Just like her, Luo Qiqi was a reputable figure in the academy, famed for both her talent and beauty. In terms of prestige, the other party might be beneath her at the moment, but that was only due to her young age.

She had no doubt that with sufficient time, Luo Qiqi would be able to surpass her.

Thus, she had been keeping tabs on this young lady since shortly after she enrolled at Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

Yet, such an outstanding person actually said that Zhang Xuan was her apothecary teacher. This was particularly astonishing.

"Just like I have said, Zhang shi has been guiding me on pill forging," Luo Qiqi replied shortly, choosing not to go into detail. "Since you know where the old residence of Elder Wu Yangzi is, can you tell us where it is? Once we confirm the location, I will compensate you with two Academic Credits."

"I don't want the two Academic Credits!" Since Luo Qiqi was unwilling to explain, Hu Yaoyao also chose not to probe into the relationship between her and Zhang Xuan.

"You don't want them?" Luo Qiqi frowned.

The Succor Tower was basically like a market, a platform for students to liaise with one another and conduct trades. Since the other party had accepted the request, it could only mean that she had acknowledged the reward as well. If so, what did the other party mean by rejecting the reward?

Fiddling with her hair, Hu Yaoyao replied with a smile, "I can tell you where Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence is, but... you have to tell me the reason why you are willing to spend such a heavy price for the information."

It had been two thousand years since Wu Yangzi had disappeared from the face of the world. There had been many people who had inherited his old residence in this period of time, so any treasure

left there should have already been swiped clean by others.

Yet, Luo Qiqi was offering two Academic Credits to purchase information about his old residence. It was clear that she was up to something.

"Pardon me, but I can't tell you that!" Luo Qiqi shook her head.

Wu Yangzi was the most famous blacksmith in the history of Hongyuan Empire, so there was no doubt that the treasures he had in his possession would surely be of exceptional value as well.

There might be a few who would attempt to do them harm out of greed if news regarding Wu Yangzi's treasure was to be made known.

"Oh?"

Seeing that Luo Qiqi was unwilling to talk about it, Hu Yaoyao said, "If you refuse to say it... it only means to say that our deal is through, and I won't be able to tell you where Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence is located. Let me just tell you this, I am the only one who knows where it is. Even if you were to search through all of the books in the academy, you won't be able to find his old residence without my help!"

Luo Qiqi turned to Zhang Xuan, and upon seeing him shake his head, she said, "I see, but we will still have to turn down your offer if that is the case. We will manage it one way or another."

Following which, she clasped her fist and bowed. "I apologize for wasting your time. We will be taking our leave now!"

After which, she left the gazebo together with Zhang Xuan.

They were determined to find Wu Yangzi's treasure, but even so, they knew that they mustn't let anyone else learn of it. Otherwise, not only would they be unable to obtain the treasure, their lives might even be threatened as well.

"Wait a moment..." Seeing that the other party would rather

abandon the deal than speak of their goal, Hu Yaoyao's lips curled up as she said, "Since you are unwilling to speak of it, allow me to change the conditions then!"

Luo Qiqi halted in her footsteps and turned around.

"You should have heard the news by now, right? Zhang Xuan has offended nearly all of the student factions in the academy, including mine. As long as you hand him over to me, I will show you to Wu Yangzi's old residence!" Hu Yaoyao said.

"Hand him over to you?" Luo Qiqi frowned as her face darkened. "Hu Yaoyao, I respect you as a senior, but this is a grave humiliation. You want me to hand my teacher over to you?"

She had already introduced Zhang Xuan as her teacher, but the other party still demanded that she hand him over. This was no different from a direct slap to her face!

As the saying goes, 'A day as one's teacher, a life as one's father!' 1

If she couldn't even protect her own teacher's dignity, what remaining pride would she have?

Realizing the problem in her words, Hu Yaoyao swiftly apologized. "Ah... I apologize for my inappropriate remark. Even though Zhang Xuan is your teacher, he is a Grade-1 student of the academy as well... I ask of you to pardon my discourtesy."

Teachers were highly respected in the Master Teacher Continent.
Heaven, Earth, Kin, Teacher, Sovereign. 2

Beneath the heaven and earth, the position of one's teacher was even above that of one's country.

It had been ingrained so deeply into her that Zhang Xuan was a Grade-1 student that she'd accidentally neglected the fact that he was Luo Qiqi's teacher as well. To insult one's teacher before one's face was grossly disrespectful.

To display such blatant discourtesy for another's teacher despite

being a master teacher, her reputation would be sullied if this were to be made known to others.

After apologizing, she turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "Zhang shi, since you have come here with Luo Qiqi, you must be interested in locating where Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence is as well... As long as you agree to my conditions, I will tell you where it is. What do you think of it?"

Seeing that the other party had decided to turn her efforts to him instead, Zhang Xuan asked with an earnest smile, "What are your conditions?"

"It's simple. You ruined our Bewitching Devil Faction's opportunity to earn money, so it's only right that you make up for it. As long as you join us and help us earn a hundred thousand middle-tier spirit stones within a year, I will tell you what you want," Hu Yaoyao said with a smile.

"Bewitching Devil Faction?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback. "Is that your faction?"

There were many benefits to having a faction, so most of the top Grade-5 students would choose to create and manage their own factions. Zhang Xuan seemed to recall hearing something about the Bewitching Devil Faction before, and from the looks of it, it seemed to be related to the young lady before him.

Seeing the look of confusion on her teacher's face, Luo Qiqi sent a telepathic message over to fill him in.

"Hu Yaoyao, her name carries the character 'Yao'. At the same time, she possesses bewitching charm... As a result, her faction is also known as the Bewitching Devil Faction 3!"

"That's right, I am the leader of the Bewitching Devil Faction." Seeing that the other party was ignorant of this, Hu Yaoyao was a little speechless.

To offend so many student factions despite not knowing who

their leaders were, this fellow sure was impudent.

"I see."

Coming a realization, Zhang Xuan nodded. Gazing at the seductive young lady whose voluptuous figure could easily hasten a man's breathing, he said calmly, "I am not interested in joining any faction... As for earning a hundred thousand middle-tier spirit stones, I don't even have that sum myself, so how could I possibly earn that for you? Choose another condition!"

He was the type of person who would never allow himself to be placed in a disadvantageous position, and yet the other party wanted him to pay? That was a good joke!

"Change another condition? Sure!" Hu Yaoyao stretched her back lazily, accentuating the beautiful curves on her body. "Serve as my servant for a year, and I will forgive you for crossing my Bewitching Devil Faction. At the same time, I can tell you where Wu Yangzi's old residence is as well."

"Servant?" Zhang Xuan was speechless. That lady was truly going further and further.

Shaking his head, he replied, "I wouldn't even accept you as my maid, and you want me to be your servant? You sure have a vivid imagination..."

Zhang Xuan meant those words. In his opinion, the only thing that was commendable about the other party was her beauty, but even that paled far in the face of Luo Ruoxin.

He wouldn't even be interested to have her serve as his servant, and yet she wanted him as her servant? Dream on!

Hearing the arrogant words from the young man before her, Hu Yaoyao's face reddened in fury, and she snapped, "Then there's no way our negotiation can go on... I wish you luck in your endeavor then!"

Born with both talent and beauty, she was a prideful person. She

had always been respected and admired by others, and she'd thought that she was already doing the other party a favor by offering to take him in as her servant. Yet, that fellow turned her down so haughtily.

He would regret his decision.

After saying that piece, she turned around, and with a step, she soared into the distance.

Exerting her strength as a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Chrysalis realm expert, she swiftly disappeared from the view of the duo.

In truth, the Bewitching Devil Faction was one of the larger student factions in the Master Teacher Academy. As its leader, she had no lack of Academic Credits or spirit stones.

The reason she wanted Zhang Xuan to join them or to serve as her servant was because he had embarrassed all of the seniors with his previous deed. If she could make him submit to her, her reputation would surely soar amidst the student populace.

However, that fellow didn't know what was good for him.

Since the other party had already rejected her so bluntly, there was no room for negotiation.

After Hu Yaoyao left, Luo Qiqi turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "She is the leader of the Bewitching Devil Faction, and I heard that she spent a great deal of effort compiling the information in the Teacher Information Documentation. Yet, her effort ended up in vain, so it's inevitable that she carries some hostility toward you... She was intentionally trying to humiliate you, so there is no need to take it to heart..."

"Don't worry, I won't." Zhang Xuan smiled. "But with this, we have reached an impasse. Alright, leave this to me. I will find a way to make her spit out the location of Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence obediently!"

"Leave it to you?" Luo Qiqi frowned. "Hu Yaoyao is an extremely

prideful and cunning person. It won't be easy to make her speak..."

In the past, there had been a handful of people who had attempted to do in Hu Yaoyao, and all of them had ended up paying a heavy price for their actions.

Even with her teacher's capability, it wouldn't be easy for him to make Hu Yaoyao reveal the location of Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence.

"Don't worry, wait for me at my residence in the Elite Sector. I will be back very soon!" Zhang Xuan instructed with a smile before he activated the Eye of Insight and followed Hu Yaoyao's trail.

In any case, he was already in a hostile relationship with the Bewitching Devil Faction. There was no way he could mend the relationship anymore, so perhaps he could attempt another method instead.

"Teacher..." Seeing Zhang Xuan pursue Hu Yaoyao, Luo Qiqi froze for a moment before yelling, "Senior Yaoyao is a student of the Terpsichore School... She specializes in soul attacks, so you must be careful!"

However, Zhang Xuan's figure had already disappeared amidst the night sky. Perhaps, he hadn't heard her words at all.

Chapter 766 The Price of the Origin Heavy Water

Zhang Xuan didn't hear Luo Qiqi's voice. Executing the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Step, he flew silently at an altitude close to the ground.

His Eye of Insight had grown extremely sharp after undergoing the third acknowledgement of Celestial Master Teacher. Even though Hu Yaoyao's trail was extremely faint, he could still see it as clear as day.

Hmm? Where is she heading to? Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

The trail first lingered around the lake before abruptly heading for a hill.

The hill looked extremely remote, and it seemed unlikely that there would be anyone staying on it. Why would the other party visit this hill at this ungodly hour?

Under the concealment of the night, Zhang Xuan advanced ahead.

The hill was filled with many short shrubs, and at its very peak was an octagonal gazebo.

There were many of such gazebos throughout the academy. The purpose of it was so that the students could stop by them any time they wished in case they suddenly stumbled upon an enlightenment in their cultivation.

Often, inspiration came suddenly and left as abruptly. If one were to miss that moment, one might miss it forever.

Sticking close to the greenery, Zhang Xuan slowly advanced toward the gazebo. Before long, he saw a bewitching figure standing within. Starlight fell upon her blurred silhouette, creating a beautiful painting.

From afar, that entrancing profile was reminiscent of a beautiful goddess of the night, rendering it impossible for one to pull his gaze off her.

Other than Luo Ruoxin, Zhang Xuan had never felt anything toward any women before. Nevertheless, he still had to admit that Hu Yaoyao did possess fatal charm.

"Isn't it about time for you to come out?" At that instant, the entrancing figure abruptly spoke up, breaking the silence of the night.

Did she notice me? Zhang Xuan jolted in astonishment, but soon, he shook his head.

In order to not leave a trail behind him, he had executed the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Step to remain floating in the air. On top of that, he had been keeping a safe distance from Hu Yaoyao, following her only by her faint trails through the Eye of Insight.

With all of the safety precautions he had taken, it would be difficult for even a Saint realm expert to notice his presence!

The next moment, resounding laughter suddenly erupted.

"Haha, Yaoyao sure is sharp. I only arrived just a moment ago, but you have already noticed me..."

With the sound of the wind, a tall figure suddenly emerged from the other end of the hill and leaped into the gazebo.

Judging from his appearance, he seemed to be in his early thirties. His aura felt powerful, reminiscent of a torrential river. Just like Hu Yaoyao, he was a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert as well.

Upon reaching such a realm, it was already impossible to discern the other party's age through their outer appearance.

He might look like he was in his thirties on the outside, but chances were that he was already in his fifties or sixties.

Even so, given the lifespan of two hundred years for a Transcendent Mortal, he could be considered to be young.

Before Hu Yaoyao could speak, another faint voice sounded by the side, and yet another figure walked into the gazebo.

"As a cultivator of the True Helios Art, your presence feels like the searing sun in the sky. How can anyone possibly miss that?"

It was a lady as well. She seemed to be of the same age as Hu Yaoyao, and she possessed a beauty not paling to the latter. However, the dispositions they commanded were the complete opposite of one another.

As if a succubus, every single movement and gesture from Hu Yaoyao would tug at one's heartstrings, leaving one tempted to make her their own. On the other hand, the other lady had an aura of poise and indifference. Despite her beauty, the coldness she exuded left others standing a distance away, not daring to get close.

True Helios Art... Could that man be the leader of the True Helios Faction, Xue Zhenyang? Zhang Xuan thought as he looked at the two new figures in the gazebo.

He had heard by chance that the leader of the True Helios Faction was a Grade-5 student named Xue Zhenyang, so he immediately thought of the other party.

Just as Zhang Xuan was deep in thought, another figure stepped into the gazebo. "Indeed, that fellow sure doesn't know how to conceal himself. Otherwise, Yaoyao wouldn't have noticed him so easily."

It was as if that figure was a specter of the darkness. If he hadn't talked, not even Zhang Xuan would have noticed him. It seemed as if he had just materialized out of nowhere.

"Long Cangyue, you might be able to tread silently in the night due to your Frigid Moon Art, but you ended up making yourself

neither a man nor a woman. Don't even compare yourself with me!" Xue Zhenyang harrumphed.

"You are the one who is neither a man nor a woman! Are you asking for a beating?" The young man named Long Cangyue flew into a rage.

"Do you think I will be afraid of you? Come! It has been too long since I have been able to work those joints of mine!" Xue Zhenyang drove the zhenqi in his body, and the next moment, an aura reminiscent of flames gathered around him as he prepared to make an attack.

"Hah, a defeated loser dares to speak so haughtily to me? Since a fight is what you want, a fight is what you'll get!" Long Cangyue sneered coldly.

In an instant, a tense atmosphere weighed down between the duo.

"Enough! To fight right after meeting one another, can't the both of you tone down a little? Don't you know we have some important matters to discuss tonight?" Hu Yaoyao harrumphed in displeasure.

Along with her words, the tense atmosphere gradually dissipated. The duo harrumphed coldly and said, "Humph, I guess we can fight on another occasion. For now, we should discuss about the matter we have at hand."

"Since everyone is gathered... Dong Xin, you can start now." With the duo toning it down, Hu Yaoyao turned her gaze to the other lady of the group and gestured for her to begin.

The cold-faced lady, Dong Xin, paused for a brief moment before reporting, "Okay. I went to that place and observed it for two days. Just as Zhenyang has said, I am certain that the item exists... However, the difficulty in obtaining it seems to be greater than our initial estimates. I fear that it will be hard to succeed with just the

four of us."

"Indeed, it won't be easy for us to succeed. Putting aside the difficult geographical terrain where the place is located, those two fellows guarding it are also beyond our capability," Xue Zhenyang said with a frown.

"We will have to ensure that our plan is foolproof, or else we might potentially end up losing our lives there," Long Cangyue added.

"Ensure that our plan is foolproof? Do we have the time to do so? If I recall correctly, that item is going to be ripe in just a month's time, and the moment it happens, those two fellows will surely consume it to refine their bones and meridians. By then, we will have lost our opportunity to get it!" Xue Zhenyang flung his sleeves and harrumphed.

"Zhenyang is right, we won't have a chance if we don't act decisively. We have to get to it before it ripens and obtain it as soon as it happens. Otherwise, if we lose this opportunity, it will take us at least several dozen years of hard work in order to reach Half-Saint!" Hu Yaoyao nodded with a frown.

"We all understand that logic, but the problem lies with how we can breach the defense of those two huge fellows!" Xue Zhenyang shook his head before turning the cold-faced young lady. "Dong Xin, you are famed genius of the Beast Tamer School. Do you have any idea how we can deal with those two fellows?"

"Those two fellows possess the Ancient Bloodline, so it will be hard to distract them with ordinary items. Didn't I tell you all to purchase some Origin Heavy Water before I went to scout? That item has the effect of purifying the Ancient Bloodline, so it might work as a bait against them. As long as we can distract them momentarily, we might be able to get to the fruit!" Dong Xin said before turning the group to ask, "So, have you bought it yet?"

"How can we possibly have the money to buy it? A single bottle of

it costs more than a hundred thousand middle-tier spirit stones! It is not like you don't know how much money we have at hand." Xue Zhenyang replied with a bitter smile.

Even as Grade-5 students, it was still hard for them to fork out a hundred thousand middle-tier spirit stones at once.

Origin Heavy Water? Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan's heart suddenly leaped in agitation.

In total, there were five dans to the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body. Even though he'd fused many physical body cultivation techniques with it, he still needed four items to serve as a catalyst to cultivate the last four dans.

The Third Incandescence happened to require the Origin Heavy Water.

However, Zhang Xuan had known its name before. Regarding its appearance or where he could find it, he had no idea whatsoever. He'd never thought that he would receive news about it from the mouths of these people.

It seemed like they were intending to purchase the Origin Heavy Water!

A hundred thousand middle-tier spirit stones... That is equivalent to ten high-tier spirit stones! My, how expensive it is! Zhang Xuan exclaimed in frustration within.

Based on his understanding of the Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, if he wanted to fully cultivate the Third Incandescence, he would at least require ten bottles of the Origin Heavy Water. However, he only had ten high-tier spirit stones at the moment, which was far from sufficient for him to obtain enough of it!

Hearing Xue Zhenyang's complaint, Dong Xin asked, "Didn't a new batch of freshmen arrive just a few days ago? I thought you all would have made a killing there?"

The student factions of the academy would usually be able to earn substantial wealth for themselves whenever new students arrived in the academy. On top of that, this was the once-in-a-decade massive intake of the academy, and according to the rumors she had heard, there should be thirty thousand freshmen this year. With so many of them, even if they were to earn just three middle-tier spirit stones from each of them, they would still easily scrape together a hundred thousand!

"Make a killing? We even made a loss, you know! Haven't you heard of that matter two days ago?" Long Cangyue shook his head in frustration.

"Heard of what? I came here as soon as I could to deliver this news to you all, so I haven't heard anything yet. What happened? Did the academy interfere in the matter?" Dong Xin asked bewilderedly.

She had spent the past few days in that area in order to gather intelligence for their operation. As a result, she had only returned earlier that night, so she wasn't too sure about the happenings in the academy.

However, it was a convention for the senior to exploit the freshmen, and the academy had never interfered with it in previous years. There shouldn't have been any reason for them to do it that year.

Besides, the practice had its merits as well. Firstly, it could dampen the conceit that most freshmen came in with, teaching them that there was always a mountain higher than the other. Secondly, participating in a faction also served as a social platform for master teachers to interact and coordinate with one another, which helped them to build camaraderie to deal with the Otherworldly Demons if the time ever came.

Since the academy didn't interfere in this matter and the freshmen had no choice but to step right into their scam, the

various factions should have been able to earn a substantial sum. But if that was the case, why did the others look as if they had made a loss instead?

"A freak amidst the freshmen wrecked our entire business. The entrance examination this year was conducted by your Beast Tamer School, so you should know some details regarding it, right?" Long Cangyue said.

"Yes." Dong Xin nodded. "It was conducted by Elder Mo, and he started preparing for it since several months ago."

As a genius of the Beast Tamer School, she had a close relationship with most of the teachers and elders there. As such, she had been let in on the matter regarding the entrance examination even before it had been announced.

In preparation for the examination, Elder Mo had been going around capturing malicious spirit beasts, and Dong Xin had helped capture a few of them herself as well.

"The rules of the entrance examination this time around are rather simple. Obtain the inner core of a Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle spirit beast, and you will obtain one point... Do you know how many points that freak of a freshman earned?" Long Cangyue asked.

It had been several days since the freshman examination had finished. As the leader of the Ashen Moon Faction, it wasn't too difficult for him to gather some intelligence regarding the happenings there.

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"How many?"

Looking at the look of disbelief on the other party's face, Dong Xin couldn't help but feel a little curious at how well the freshmen did. "Since he is a freshman, his cultivation should probably be at Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle. Even if he were to make the breakthrough to Cosmos Bridge realm, it would already be an incredible feat for him to kill three Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle spirit beasts within a single day. Three of them would give him 120 points... Could his score have exceeded a thousand?"

A Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle spirit beast was worth 40 points. It was already rather formidable for one to slay three spirit beasts of the same cultivation realm as one in a single day. Even if one were to multiply that by ten, that would only be 1200 points.

Scoring 1200 points was indeed an incredible feat for a freshman, but surely it wouldn't produce such a look of disbelief on the face of the leader of the Ashen Moon Faction?

Hearing those words, Long Cangyue scoffed. "A thousand points? If it was only that much, would I need to be so shocked?"

"Let me tell you this straight, he obtained a grand total of 43,724 points..."

"H-how many did you say? 43,000 points?" Hearing those words, Dong Xin nearly fainted on the spot.

She had participated in the capture of those spirit beasts, so she knew how difficult it was to locate and hunt them down.

On top of that, they had targeted the aggressive spirit beasts who had a record of hurting others, and they were far more difficult to deal with than the spirit beasts enclosed in a cage. Every single of them was incredibly cunning, and a lapse in one's concentration could easily lead to one's death. Yet, a freshman had actually

obtained more than 40,000 points in such an examination... Wasn't this joke a little too much?

How many spirit beasts must he have killed to obtain such a result?

Could he have single-handedly slaughtered every last spirit beast in the mountain?

"That's not all. The points he obtained weren't from killing the spirit beasts, but by... taming them!" Long Cangyue added.

"Taming them?" Dong Xin exclaimed sharply.

Taming a spirit beast was far more difficult than killing one. Even her, a renowned genius of the Beast Tamer School, would have to spend several months or even years in order to achieve the required intimacy to tame one. Yet, to tame multiple spirit beasts in a day... Not to mention, enough of them to obtain 40,000 points... Just how many spirit beasts in the world did he tame!

Seeing Dong Xin's expression, Long Cangyue could tell what she was thinking, so he said, "He tamed more than four hundred spirit beasts... Furthermore, according to the accounts from the dozens of eye-witnesses in the area, he did it within just two hours!"

"Two hours..." Dong Xin couldn't help but swallow a mouthful of saliva.

Even she didn't have the ability to do the same.

"It's this incredible feat that won him School Head Mo's favor, and School Head Mo offered to take him in as his disciple!" Long Cangyue said.

"Take him in as his disciple? School Head Mo?" Dong Xin was stunned.

All along, she had been working hard in the hope that her effort could catch School Head Mo's eye. However, School Head Mo never seemed to notice her.

As a result, she'd thought that School Head Mo had no intention of accepting any disciple at all. Who knew that he would end up favoring a freshman over her?

"That's right. However, what is the most unbelievable thing about this matter is that... the fellow actually rejected the offer!" Long Cangyue's eyes flew around the place.

The first time he heard of that news, he had also been rendered dumbfounded.

To actually reject School Head Mo, one of the Ten Great Master Teachers... He sure was gutsy!

At this moment, Dong Xin felt as though she had been struck by lightning.

Countless students in the academy were vying to become School Head Mo's student, and yet that fellow actually rejected the offer? Did he have a screw loose somewhere?

"That's not all, there is still more to come. After that fellow heard many people had failed the examination, he gave away his points away to them so that they could all clear the examination!" Long Cangyue said.

"Gave away his points?"

Dong Xin widened her eyes in astonishment as her body swayed weakly from side to side. "The points one obtains in the entrance examination can be used to trade for Academic Credits... Given his accomplishment in the examination, he could easily have received ten Academic Credits! Even if he has no interest in Academic Credits, he could easily apply for twenty high-tier spirit stones from the academy with his score... And yet, he gave them away?"

The points could be traded for Academic Credits and high-tier spirit stone? Upon hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nearly spewed blood from his mouth.

If he'd known that those points could be traded for Academic

Credits and high-tier spirit stones, he would have never idled around in the entrance examination! He would have surely rushed around the mountain, taming, and killing as many spirit beasts as he could!

At the very least, he would have strived for a million points!

Or if it came down to it, he could even have handed the Byzantium Helios Beast over...

Consonant Spirit realm spirit beasts were worth 10 points, Cosmos Bridge realm spirit beasts were worth 100 points, Perfect Harmonization realm spirit beasts were worth 1,000 points, Ethereal Treading realm spirit beasts were worth 10,000 points, Chrysalis realm spirit beasts were worth 100,000 points, Half-Saint beasts were worth 1,000,000 points, Nascent Saint beasts were worth 10,000,000 points... Then a Saint beast should be worth at least 100,000,000 points, right?

Furthermore, that fellow was at Saint 1-dan pinnacle, which meant... 400,000,000 points!

Calculating by proportion, wouldn't that mean that he could receive 100,000 Academic Credits or 200,000 high-tier spirit stones from the academy?

Regret dyed Zhang Xuan's guts green. 1

If he had that many Academic Credits and high-tier spirit stones, would there be anywhere that he couldn't go?

He would be able to make his round through all of the libraries in the academy, and perhaps, he might already be on his way to a Conferred Empire now!

I will look for Elder Mo later... Perhaps, I might still be able to exchange the Byzantium Helios Beast for some Academic Credits...

Zhang Xuan thought about the matter for an instant before eventually shaking his head. But putting aside the fact that the entrance examination is already over, which means that the

academy has the right to refuse to give me the corresponding Academic Credits and high-tier spirit stones, even if I am able to do so, I won't be able to explain to them how I managed to capture the Byzantium Helios Beast. On top of that, it would reveal my possession of the Otherworldly Demon puppets...

It would be impossible for him to explain the presence of the Otherworldly Demon puppets at the moment, and even if he could, they were currently his greatest trump card, so it would be unwise for him to reveal their existence as well. Thus, even though it was a huge shame, Zhang Xuan still decided to drop the matter in the end.

"To be honest, even I can't help but be in awe of how generous that fellow is!" Long Cangyue continued.

"But that still isn't all. When you hear what he did afterward, you will surely go mad!"

"Oh?" Suppressing her shock, Dong Xin turned to look at Long Cangyue.

On the other hand, Hu Yaoyao and Xue Zhenyang were listening to the conversation between the duo silently. Judging from the looks of helplessness on their faces, it was likely that they had long heard of it.

"Shortly after clearing the entrance examination, that fellow headed to the Blacksmith School, and god knows what he did, but he destroyed the entire Passageway of Records along with half of the Blacksmith Guild..." Long Cangyue revealed.

"Passageway of Records?" Blacksmith Guild?" Dong Xin gasped in shock. "Vice School Head Yuan didn't kill him for that?"

As one of the senior students of the academy, she was aware of Vice School Head's austere and fiery temper. He expected students to abide by the rules strictly, and he tolerated zero nonsense from others.

To destroy the Passageway of Records along with half of the entire Blacksmith Guild... He should be glad that Vice School Head Yuan didn't strangle him to death on the spot!

"Kill him? I also thought that would be the case as well when I heard about it... But not only did Vice School Head spare Zhang Xuan, he even treated him with the utmost politeness and led him to the Ocean of Weapons personally to take the blacksmith examination! And that fellow, within four hours within the Ocean of Weapons, progressed from a mere apprentice to become... a 6-star blacksmith!" Long Cangyue said.

"W-what did you say? Within four hours... he took the 1-star examination all the way to the 6-star examination?" Dong Xin's mouth slowly widened in shock.

No words could explain what she was feeling at the moment.

That fellow's previous deeds were incredible, but it was at least remotely possible. The world was huge, and there were all kinds of incredible geniuses out there. They weren't so arrogant as to think that they would be the top of the world. But what the heck was with clearing the 1-star to 6-star examination within 4 hours?

More importantly, the prerequisite to taking the 6-star examination was for one's cultivation to reach Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Chrysalis realm. This wasn't just a condition imposed by the Blacksmith Guild, but that it was fundamentally impossible for a cultivator beneath that cultivation realm to clear the examination.

For one, the purity and quantity of their zhenqi would be insufficient to evoke the heat in the flames, making it impossible for them to melt most ores that 6-star blacksmiths were expected to process.

Are you sure you aren't messing with me?

"That matter alarmed School Head Zhao, and he insisted on

taking that fellow in as his teacher's student, or in other words, his junior... But that fellow rejected it yet again!"

Long Cangyue could clearly perceive the disbelief in Dong Xin's eyes, but it was all the truth.

Many had witnessed Zhang Xuan's deeds in the Blacksmith School, and as the leaders of the largest student factions in the academy, it wouldn't be too difficult for them to verify the authenticity of the news.

"School Head Mo offered to take him in as his disciple, and School Head Zhao offered to acknowledge him as his junior... but they were rejected?"

Swallowing a mouthful of saliva, Dong Xin fell into deep thought for a few moments before lifting her gaze to ask, "That freshman is indeed a formidable figure, but... what does he have to do with the issue regarding the finances of the student factions?"

Thinking about it now, they had been talking about the lack of money in their student factions just a moment ago when the topic had suddenly shifted to that fellow. Could that freshman be responsible for the student faction's business failure?

"As you know, the main source of income of student factions during the start of the term is from the sales of the 'Teacher Information Documentation' to the incoming freshmen, but somehow, that fellow managed to obtain an even more accurate and detailed version of it and gave it away for free... With that, who else would buy ours? Not only so, our reputations were even dragged down into the gutters. Quite a few freshmen who were intending to join our factions ended up backing out due to that scandal!" Long Cangyue explained with a hint of fury in his voice.

That matter had caused significant losses to his Ashen Moon Faction, so he'd ordered an investigation into the culprit of the affair, Zhang Xuan. Who could have known that the results of the investigation would be so baffling?

If it had been any other freshmen, he would have stomped right up to them and given them a good pummeling so as to beat the rules into their bones. But this fellow... how could he dare to touch a person whom School Head Mo and School Head Zhao favored?

"..." Not expecting such a situation, Dong Xin was at a loss for words.

But indeed, if there was a free and better version, who would want to waste a hundred middle-tier spirit stones on their document?

"Then... don't any of you have a way to deal with him?"

"What can we possibly do against that fellow? His cultivation might not be too high, but he has the backing of two of the Ten Great Master Teachers. Unless you wish to offend those two, there is hardly anything we can do about him... Since all of us are gathered here today, let's discuss that matter as well." Long Cangyue sighed deeply as he turned his gaze to the group.

"Not only did he spoil our market, his actions also sullied our reputations as well. We have to punish him or else we might risk losing our authority amongst the student populace!"

"Indeed, we can't let him go that easily!" Xue Zhenyang narrowed his eyes and harrumphed.

"So, do you two have any ideas yet?" Dong Xin asked.

"This..." Long Cangyue and Xue Zhenyang glanced at one another and smiled bitterly.

School Head Mo and School Head Zhao were two gigantic barriers standing in the way of their vengeance, and there was hardly any way they could circumvent them. If they really had an idea in mind, they would have long carried it out. Would they still allow Zhang Xuan to get off scot-free even to this day?

At this moment, Hu Yaoyao suddenly spoke up with a soft chuckle. "Speaking of that fellow, I met him today!"

"You met him?" The others immediately turned their sights to Hu Yaoyao.

Even though they had nearly died from shock due to the many rumors they had heard regarding Zhang Xuan, none of them had been fortunate enough to meet him yet.

The other party had caused a huge storm right from the moment he'd enrolled at the academy, so they hadn't had the chance to see his appearance for themselves yet.

"Yes. I believe you all should know the genius of the Grade-2 students, Luo Qiqi, right?" asked Hu Yaoyao as she glanced at them.

"Of course!" Dong Xin replied.

Luo Qiqi had been enrolled at the academy for barely a year, but she had already advanced from 4-star pinnacle to 5-star low-tier. Such speed was astounding even when taking into consideration the innumerable geniuses that had come before her in the academy.

Possessing both looks and talent, it was inevitable that they would be aware of her.

"I saw her together with Zhang Xuan earlier, and she had addressed him as her teacher!" Hu Yaoyao said.

"Teacher?"

"Luo Qiqi addressed him as her teacher? You... Are you sure you aren't pulling our legs?"

"Luo Qiqi has a mysterious background, and it is rumored that she is the princess from some empire. I have tried looking into her background myself, but I wasn't able to uncover anything substantial about her either... A person like that actually acknowledged a freshman as her teacher?"

Long Cangyue, Xue Zhenyang, and the others could hardly

believe their ears.

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"It is not the aged but the skilled who becomes the teacher, this has always been how we master teachers work. Considering how Luo Qiqi was willing to address him as her teacher without the slightest indignation in her voice, it can only mean that he possesses ability surpassing her significantly in certain aspects," Hu Yaoyao said.

There was no human who could possibly be skilled in all aspects. Even the most formidable of cultivators had their own weaknesses.

As a result, there were cases where a higher ranked master teacher acknowledged a lower ranked master teacher as their teacher.

Even Empyrean Kong shi had sought guidance from Tan shi, an inconspicuous 5-star master teacher from the remote Tan Kingdom.

Understanding this fact, the others nodded in agreement. After which, Dong Xin asked, "Since you have met him, what is your evaluation of him? Are there any flaws he has that we can exploit against him?"

"We barely traded a few words, so I am unable to make a complete evaluation of his character. Nevertheless, based on what I have seen so far, he seems to be an honest and upright person. It doesn't seem like he will do anything against his principles. However, if there is one flaw I have to name about him... it will be that his words are infuriating!" Hu Yaoyao said.

Even though she was a 6-star low-tier master teacher, she was still unable to discern anything significant about Zhang Xuan. The only thing that she came out of the encounter with was her raging fury from the other party's words.

"His words are infuriating?" The others blinked in surprise.

To make a person like Hu Yaoyao, who could take most things in her stride, angry, that fellow was indeed a genius in some ways.

After a moment of contemplation, Hu Yaoyao added, "Oh, right! That fellow seems to be interested in the old residence of Wu Yangzi. I feel that we can use this as a leverage against him to teach him a lesson!"

Even though the competition among the four of their factions was rather rife, perhaps due to mutual respect for one another, the four of them were surprisingly on relatively good terms.

"Wu Yangzi's old residence? It's good that he has something that he desires; we should be able to use it against him. Why don't we give him a false location and set up a trap there so as to teach him a lesson? This way, we might be able pull him out of School Head Mo and School Head Zhao's notice to teach him a lesson!" Xue Zhenyang's eyes glowed in excitement.

The years of cultivating the True Helios Art had slowly shaped his personality to be more forceful and decisive. If it was something he could resolve easily with brute force, he wouldn't hesitate to do so.

"That isn't safe. If he were to report the matter to School Head Mo and the others afterward, we will surely be punished for it! We have to find a way to make him suffer without having him speaking about it. In order to do so, it will be best if we can find something to threaten him with so that he won't dare speak of it," Long Cangyue said.

Unlike Xue Zhenyang's straightforward personality, Long Cangyue tended to be more thorough and scheming in his actions.

Since Zhang Xuan was favored by School Head Mo and School Head Zhao, it would be safe to assume that they would be inclined to protect him if something happened. Thus, they had to be careful when dealing with him, or else they would suffer two of the Ten Great Master Teachers' wrath, and that wasn't a joking matter at

all.

Thus... the only way it would be safe for them to strike was to obtain some kind of material they could blackmail him with, so that even if they were to make him to suffer, he wouldn't dare speak up about it.

A thought came to Dong Xin's mind, and her eyes lit up.

"Something to threaten him with... That is indeed a good idea! Yaoyao, you are better than us with such matters. I recall there are quite a few students who have crossed the Bewitching Devil Faction over the past few years, and while they ended up suffering immensely for their actions, none of them dared to speak up about it."

Hu Yaoyao's reputation in the academy was resounding. This wasn't just due to her incredible talent in cultivation and her beauty, but for her unconventional means in dealing with problems as well. There were many master teachers who had challenged her authority in the past, but she had managed to resolve them beautifully while giving the other party the humiliation of their life.

"Now that you speak of it, I do have an idea in mind. Doesn't that fellow like to sell others his favor? Since that's the case, why don't I drag his reputation down to his gutters and let him understand the price of offending me, Hu Yaoyao!"

A sharp glint flashed across Hu Yaoyao's dark eyes as a chilling smile crept onto her face. "And that Luo Qiqi as well. It seems like she cares for her teacher quite a fair bit... If she were to learn how shameless and immoral her teacher is... Let's see if she will still be able to respect him as before!"

Knowing that Hu Yaoyao would never say anything she was unconfident of, the eyes of the others lit up in excitement.

"Leave this matter to me. However, I want an additional share of

that item for dealing with that fellow. This request of mine isn't too much, isn't it?" Hu Yaoyao said.

"An additional share?"

"... Fine. As long as you can deal with that fellow, we will give you an additional share!"

The others nodded in agreement.

"That's good. For the time being, you should focus your efforts on acquiring the Origin Heavy Water. We'll set off once the preparations are ready. As for Zhang Xuan, just wait for the good news! As long as he wants to know the location of Wu Yangzi's old residence, he will have no choice but to obey my commands obediently," Hu Yaoyao said as her lips curled up.

Obey her commands obediently? It seems like she has some plan up her sleeves... Zhang Xuan thought.

Considering how confident Hu Yaoyao sounded, it seemed she had already found a sure-kill way to deal with him.

Zhang Xuan mused over the various possibilities for a moment, but without anything else for him to work with, it was impossible for him to determine the other party's next course of action. Thus, he could only give up in the end.

If the other party was going to go after him, he would just have to deal with it accordingly when the time came.

At the very least, he did know of the other party's intentions, so he wouldn't be caught completely off-guard when something happened.

After Hu Yaoyao and the others were done negotiating, they swiftly left the gazebo and flitted down the hill.

Only after ensuring that everyone was gone did Zhang Xuan finally stand up.

Even though I know that she means me harm, I still have to get

the location of Wu Yangzi's old residence out of her... After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan eventually decided to follow Hu Yaoyao. He activated the Eye of Insight and hurried off in the direction the latter had departed in.

As for the treasure which Hu Yaoyao and the others seemed to be targeting, that had nothing to do with him, so he had no intentions in getting involved either. As for the Heavy Origin Water, since he knew that it was possible to procure it with high-tier spirit stones in Hongyuan City, he would just have to earn sufficient money to purchase it in the future.

Thus, the only thing left for him to do was to find Wu Yangzi's old residence.

Considering Wu Yangzi's prestige and standing in Hongyuan City back then, it was likely that his treasure would hold great wealth. Thus, as long as Zhang Xuan could lay his hands on it, he would not need to worry about having insufficient funds for his cultivation anymore.

Following Hu Yaoyao's trail, he soon arrived at a vast courtyard.

There are so many ladies here...

As Zhang Xuan slowly crept within manor, he soon realized that something was amiss.

For some reason, the number of female students in this manor was disproportionately higher than the male students. Furthermore, each and everyone one of them had an elegant figure and beautiful face.

While they were unable to compete with top beauties in the academy such as Hu Yaoyao and Luo Qiqi, the charm that they exuded would still be irresistible for most men.

The number of male master teachers had always been higher than the number of female master teachers, yet the number of female master teachers here far exceeded the male master

teachers. Zhang Xuan found the situation before him completely bizarre.

The density of people increased the further Zhang Xuan progressed, so he had no choice but to slow down in order to avoid detection. It was fortunate that he possessed the Eye of Insight, allowing him to clearly discern the actions of others and take precautions in advance. On top of that, he possessed the Heaven's Path zhenqi and Red Dust Heaven Ascending Step, allowing him to move discreetly without alarming others.

An hour later...

Following the trail, Zhang Xuan soon found himself penetrating into the depths of the manor.

"Xinru, keep watch for me outside. I will be preparing some things, and I don't want to be interrupted."

After advancing a moment longer, Zhang Xuan suddenly a crisp voice ahead of him. It was Hu Yaoyao's voice. He swiftly rushed to hide behind a huge tree in the vicinity.

Following the source of the voice, he saw Hu Yaoyao standing right before a room.

"Yes!" the lady named Xinru replied with a nod.

Xinru was a young lady in her twenties, and she possessed an exceptional figure and beauty as well.

Is Hu Yaoyao intending to prepare her hand to deal with me? Having eavesdropped on the conversation among Hu Yaoyao, Xue Zhenyang, Long Cangyue, and Dong Xin, he knew that Hu Yaoyao was intending to deal with him.

This might be a good opportunity to see what the other party was up to so that he could come up with a suitable countermeasure for it.

With such a thought in mind, Zhang Xuan slowly flew to the top

of the room which Hu Yaoyao was standing before.

His movements were as light as a feather, leaving no sound whatsoever.

Hu!

After landing on the roof, he gently pried open one of the brick tiles above and peeked down.

Just as his gaze fell into the room, Hu Yaoyao stepped into the room as well.

Under the warm glow of the many Night Illumination Pearls embedded in the room, Hu Yaoyao could be seen dressed in a crimson silk robe, which further accentuated her perfect figure.

Her smooth white skin, long and slender neck, exquisitely-shaped earlobes, silky pitch-black hair... No matter how one looked at her, Hu Yaoyao was like a bewitching devil that one couldn't avert one's gaze from.

Huala!

Just as Zhang Xuan was staring intently to see what Hu Yaoyao was up to, the other party abruptly walked up to her bedframe and gently pulled at the knot by her waist.

The crimson robe she was wearing immediately slipped down her body, revealing her pristine skin.

From top to bottom, there was not a single piece of cloth on her. Her beautiful figure lay bare in the room.

"..." Zhang Xuan was speechless.

He'd thought that the other party would prepare some kind of artifact or trap to deal with him, so he'd climbed onto the roof to peek on the other party, hoping that he could perhaps use this to blackmail her into revealing Wu Yangzi's old residence.

Who knew that the other party would strip off her clothes as soon as she returned to the room... This was way too weird!

The sky had darkened just a moment ago, so she couldn't possibly be intending to go to sleep. But if that was the case, why was she taking off her clothes?

He truly couldn't understand what was going on in that woman's head.

Never mind, I shouldn't look any further! Knowing that his actions would be nothing but despicable if he were to continue peeking, he decisively placed the roof tile back.

If he were to be branded as a perverted peeping Tom because of this matter, that would be truly unfortunate... Just the thought of it sent shivers down his spine.

Hu Yaoyao's room was situated at the highest point in the area, and it was the largest one as well. Sitting on its roof, he could easily see everything in the other courtyards. In a few of them, he saw a few ladies dressed in resplendent outfits moving about.

Their elegant garments and their bewitching movements left him in an entranced state with just a single glance.

It was only after driving his zhenqi that Zhang Xuan finally recovered, and he immediately fell into deep contemplation.

Could this be... the Terpsichore School?

The fact that they were able to make him momentarily lose his senses through their dancing meant that their gestures carried the ability to beguile souls, and the only occupation in the academy that was capable of such a feat was terpsichore.

This also explained why this manor consisted mainly of women as well.

It will be awkward for me to remain here considering that Hu Yaoyao is naked inside... But since I am already at the Terpsichore School, I might as well pay their library a visit so that I don't make this trip a waste!

Knowing that it would be suspicious for him to remain here, Zhang Xuan decided to postpone the matter for the moment and visit the library so as to deal with his Innate Fetal Poison.

Having made up his mind, Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight and began scanning his surroundings. Soon, his gaze fell on a towering building in the distance.

Three elegantly calligraphed words, carrying both elegance and an historic aura, came into sight—Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion.

I should go over to take a look!

With eyes gleaming with excitement, Zhang Xuan flitted off into the darkness.

Chapter 769 Night at the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion

The Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion was large and majestic, standing tall and conspicuous even amidst the deep darkness of the night.

In several breaths, Zhang Xuan landed on the branch of a large tree just outside the building.

The libraries of the academy require a student token and Academic Credits to enter... Zhang Xuan scratched his head in distress.

He'd thought that he would be able to access the library freely as a student of the academy, but based on what he saw at the entrance of the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion, that didn't seem to be the case.

Just like the Ocean of Weapons in the Blacksmith School, the doors to the libraries could only open by scanning one's student token and paying the required amount of Academic Credits. Unfortunately, Zhang Xuan had neither of the two, so it was impossible for him to enter.

If he were to attempt to barge in and trigger some kind of protective formation due to it, he might even attract the attention of the school's elders, bringing himself trouble.

But I am already here... Am I to return empty-handed? Zhang Xuan muttered in frustration.

The matter regarding his Innate Fetal Poison could not wait. His goal was just standing before him, and if he were to return just like that, he might possibly regret it for life.

Wait... The mechanisms and formations protecting the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion are indeed useful against cultivators, but can it block off souls? After all, souls are intangible

existences, rendering most mechanisms and formations ineffective against them. Perhaps, I might be able to enter the premises this way... Zhang Xuan thought.

Based on Zhang Xuan's analysis, it seemed like the formations and mechanisms around the library could only sense tangible beings. As such, it might be possible for him to sneak in as a soul.

Furthermore, while he could only duplicate books in the Library of Heaven's Path by touching them in the past, with the new upgrades it had just undergone, he could replicate them just by laying his eyes on them... In other words, even with just his soul, he could gather every single book in the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion into the Library of Heaven's Path easily!

Let me give it a try!

The more Zhang Xuan thought about it, the more excited he became by the idea. Thus, he hid his body well amidst dense shrubs before drawing his soul out.

As if an apparition of the night, his soul gradually approached the tightly shut doors of the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion silently. At its entrance, he saw several students standing guard to keep away intruders.

Despite the intangible nature of souls, they were still bound by the laws of the world. One of the manifestations of such a phenomenon was their inability to pass through concrete walls, and unfortunately for Zhang Xuan, the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion was made of an airtight material which prevented even souls from slipping through.

Just as he was contemplating about how he could enter, he suddenly heard footsteps behind him as a figure approached the doors of the library.

The figure walked up to the doors and bowed deeply to the several students at the entrance.

"Seniors, I would like to access the library to check some information."

She was a lady in her thirties, and the master teacher emblem pinned on her chest had five stars on it.

5-star low-tier master teacher, she was a Grade-2 student.

One of the seniors glanced at her and said, "Your student token and Academic Credits token!"

Most likely, the seniors standing guard at the entrance were taking this job as a way to earn additional Academic Credits to finance their expenditure.

"Yes!" The student quickly passed her student token and Academic Credits Token over.

A moment later, the senior nodded and said, "You are a Grade-2 student, so you can only browse through the books of Grade-3 and below. If you attempt to look at any book beyond that tier, you will be expelled from the library immediately. On top of that, you are only given twenty hours of reading time for each Academic Credit you spend, and you are not allowed to take out any books from the library."

"Yes!" The student nodded in response.

As a Grade-2 student of the Master Teacher Academy, she was accustomed to the rules of the library.

"Ok, you may enter now!"

After emphasizing on the rules, the senior waved her hand to gesture that the student may pass. Carrying her student token and Academic Credits token, the student walked up to a stone pedestal in front of the doors and placed them on it. Jiya! The doors to the library opened.

This is a good opportunity for me to enter as well!

Upon seeing a chance to slip into the building, Zhang Xuan

immediately got to action and dived in behind the student as well.

After entering the doors, a vast hall immediately appeared before his eyes. The walls were embedded with Night Illumination Pearls of all sizes, making its interiors as bright as day.

Shelves of books were positioned orderly in the hall, and the books on them were innumerable.

As expected of the Master Teacher Academy! Their collection of books is indeed astounding... Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Terpsichore was one of the more remote occupations, so the number of books on them was severely limited. However, the members of the Master Teacher Academy were all master teachers who had unique insights and had their own understanding of the occupation. Over time, more and more books had been added to the collection, resulting in the impressive compendium that lay before him at this very instant.

"I should collect them all first and look at them later..."

Considering the number of books that were in the library, it would take a considerable amount of time if he had to go through them one by one.

Zhang Xuan's soul moved to the very first bookshelf at the corner and began scanning through them.

Flaws!

Muttering in his head, he could feel that book after book was being replicated in the Library of Heaven's Path.

It was as if his eyes were scanners, allowing him to replicate the content within books entirely just by laying his eyes on them. This allowed him to copy books at a rate far quicker than he did by running.

This is really great! Zhang Xuan thought excitedly.

Hualala!

Books were filling up the shelves in the Library of Heaven's Path at an unprecedented rate.

Four hours later, Zhang Xuan was finally done taking in all of the books in the hall, and he compiled them into a Heaven's Path manual.

On to the second floor...

After Zhang Xuan was done with the first floor, he proceeded on to the second floor.

There were significantly fewer books here than on the first floor, but the content covered within them was more profound.

Just like apothecaries and blacksmiths, terpsichores were also ranked from 1-star to 9-star. Contained on the first floor was the basic knowledge regarding dancing from apprentice to 4-star pinnacle whereas the second floor contained the dancing art and cultivation technique manuals corresponding to 5-star primary terpsichores.

Zhang Xuan took all of the books on the shelves into the Library of Heaven's Path without any hesitation.

Two hours later, he was done collecting the books on the second level.

Continuing on...

It wasn't easy for him to come to get into the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion, so it would be a huge shame if he didn't make use of this opportunity to take in as many books as he could. Thus, he hurried off to the third floor.

Technically speaking, a Grade-1 student was only allowed to browse through the books on the first and second floor. This rule was set by the academy in order to discourage ambitious students from attempting what was far beyond their capability, and various measures were implemented to enforce it.

However, while these measures could stop students, they couldn't do the same to souls. With a thought, Zhang Xuan's soul turned into a stream that flowed right through the formation blockading the stairs and arrived at the next floor.

There were even fewer books on the third floor, and Zhang Xuan finished them in just an hour.

After which, he did the same for the fourth, fifth, and sixth floor.

It only took him another two hours to collect the books on the remaining three floors.

In other words, in less than ten hours, he had made duplicates of the innumerable books in the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion in his head!

With a slight smile on his face, Zhang Xuan thought in satisfaction, I will examine them carefully when I return to my residence!

He had been thinking that he would have to pay a visit to the Terpsichore School someday to browse through the books, but who could have known that he would accomplish this while following behind Hu Yaoyao?

Furthermore, now that he had learned that he could easily access the libraries in the Master Teacher Academy through his soul, wouldn't he be able to do so for the other schools as well?

If that is the case, I should be able to cover all of the books in the ten schools within ten days. By then, I would have sufficient books to push my cultivation to higher realms as well, perhaps even reaching Saint realm. With that, my work at the Master Teacher Academy will be done! Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in agitation.

As long as he had sufficient books to compile the Heaven's Path Divine Art, advancing his cultivation would be as easy as eating and drinking.

The main reason he had chosen to enroll in the Master Teacher

Academy was so that he could access their trove of books.

The upgrade of his Library of Heaven's Path had truly come at an ideal time.

With this, he would be able to access the knowledge from the various schools as he pleased, and his lack of Academic Credits wouldn't be an issue anymore.

Ten days should be enough for him to cover everything in the Master Teacher Academy. After compiling them into the respective Heaven's Path manuals, he would be able to make a breakthrough both in his cultivation and master teacher ranking.

Just the thought of advancing six realms—the Perfect Harmonization realm, Void Treading realm, Chrysalis realm, Half-Saint, Nascent Saint, and Saint realm—and bringing the ten supporting occupations to 6-star pinnacle left his heart trembling in excitement...

I should go through the terpsichore books first...

However, Zhang Xuan knew that it wouldn't be as simple as that. Thus, shrugging the thought off with a smile, he turned his consciousness back to the Library of Heaven's Path.

Hu!

New Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art manuals appeared before his eyes.

There was a total of six of them, consisting of books from 1-star to 6-star.

Let me see if the portions regarding souls...

Zhang Xuan turned his gaze outside swiftly and noticed that the sun was already setting. It didn't seem like there would be sufficient time for him to learn the entire Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art, so he chose to focus his attention on those regarding souls instead.

Huala!

On Zhang Xuan's will, the books regarding soul cultivation flew from the shelves and gathered in front of him.

Compile! he commanded silently, and yet another book appeared before him.

This was the book that could potentially suppress the Innate Fetal Poison in his soul. Unable to suppress his agitation, Zhang Xuan immediately started browsing through it.

It didn't take long for him to finish reading it all.

By then, his face was already looking incredibly awful.

These are only methods to strengthen one's soul, and they aren't even complete. They won't be much help in dealing with the Innate Fetal Poison...

The books he had collected were sufficient to form a Heaven's Path manual, but it was only effective in strengthening one's soul. Against the Innate Fetal Poison, it was nearly completely useless.

In other words, after all the effort he had put in that night, he didn't have a way counter the Innate Fetal Poison to alleviate the threat he was under yet.

What do I do now... Zhang Xuan thought frustratedly.

To him, the most urgent matter at hand was to suppress the Innate Fetal Poison in his soul. Otherwise, if the Innate Fetal Poison was triggered on a whim, that might very well be the day he would breathe his last breath.

He'd thought that, given the nature of the terpsichore occupation, the terpsichores would possess a deep understanding of souls, and he might be able to find a solution to his problems here.

But it seemed like he was being too naive.

If the Innate Fetal Poison could be dealt with that easily,

Empyrean Kong shi wouldn't have to rush all the way to become a 9-star master teacher to resolve it properly. He would have long found a solution before then.

Nevertheless, these methods are still effective in building up the resilience of one's soul. I should try to compile them with the soul oracle techniques and see if I can perfect them!

The soul cultivation techniques he had obtained from Mo Hunsheng ranged from Transcendent Mortal 1-dan to 9-dan, but he didn't have enough books to complete them then. Perhaps, if he were to fuse these books together with them, he might be able to compile new Heaven's Path Soul Art manuals.

Currently, the strongest Heaven's Path Soul Art manual he had was still at Consonant Spirit realm, so his soul cultivation was still capped there as well. With the new books he had gathered, it was worth giving it a shot.

Compile!

Zhang Xuan tried putting the books together with his soul cultivation technique manuals.

Hula!

Two new books appeared before Zhang Xuan's gaze. He swiftly grabbed them and flipped them open.

"These are the Cosmos Bridge realm and Perfect Harmonization realm soul cultivation techniques. There are... no flaws at all! They have reached the level of Heaven's Path!" Looking at the content of the books, Zhang Xuan nearly burst out laughing out of sheer delight.

He'd thought that his trip had been a wasted one, but who would have thought that he'd be able to compile the 6-dan and 7-dan Heaven's Path Soul Art manuals using the books he had gathered from the library?

With these two books, he would be able to advance his soul

cultivation to Perfect Harmonization realm, thus enhancing his fighting prowess significantly.

Even though the advancement of his soul cultivation wouldn't be able to resolve the threat concerning the Innate Fetal Poison, it would at least help to suppress the Innate Fetal Poison a bit.

It seems like it's already morning. Time for me to return...

By the time Zhang Xuan was done, the brilliant radiance of the sun rays was already spilling in from the eastern horizon of the skyline. It was dawn.

Chapter 770 6-star Terpsichore

One of the reasons Zhang Xuan was able to slip into the Terpsichore School in the first place was due to the concealment of the night. Even with his aura hidden by utilizing the unique nature of his Heaven's Path zhenqi, there was a huge chance that someone might spot him if he were to attempt to sneak off in the day.

If he didn't leave right now, he would be stuck in the library once the crowd start spilling into the school.

Thus, without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan's soul rushed to the first floor of the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion, heading for the doors.

The student whom he entered with was still busily looking through the shelves. However, judging from the deep frown on her forehead, it seemed she hadn't found the book she was seeking yet.

Zhang Xuan didn't know what she needed, so he couldn't help her even if he wanted to. Thus, he headed straight for the main door.

Hmm?

Zhang Xuan walked up to the door and tried to open it, but to his alarm, it wouldn't budge.

In order to prevent any unauthorized personnel from entering the premises, a special mechanism was installed to ensure that the doors wouldn't open to without the presence of a student token and Academic Credit token. Unless one possessed strength beyond the level of a Half-Saint, it would be impossible to open!

Zhang Xuan was only able to get in earlier by following the student in front of him. As long as no one tried to enter or leave the library, he would be trapped within!

What do I do now? Zhang Xuan thought frustratedly.

It was still dawn, so there were still very few people in the Terpsichore School at the moment. If he were to delay it any longer, he might very well be found!

For an unaffiliated individual to be snooping around the Terpsichore School in the early morning, there was no way he could explain that!

But if it wasn't opened, the formations and mechanisms constructed around the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion were more than sufficient to prevent a soul like him from leaving even if they weren't able to perceive him.

Zhang Xuan turned to look at the student in the library worriedly, but the latter didn't seem like she was about to leave anytime soon. Sighing deeply, he could only continue to wait patiently.

Forget it, there's no use worrying over this. I should just make use of this time to study the Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art...

Since there was nothing he could do in this situation, he decided to find a quiet spot in the library and immerse his consciousness in the Library of Heaven's Path to read through the terpsichorean books he had just compiled.

He had a full compilation of Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art from 1-star to 6-star, and detailed within them were the cultivation techniques for the various terpsichorean arts.

Since he couldn't do anything else at the moment, he flipped open the 1-star Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art and began browsing through it seriously.

With the new upgrade of his Library of Heaven's Path, he could take in the content of a book just by flipping open the book, thus allowing him to understand and assimilate the essence of it even faster than before.

To become a terpsichore, one must have a powerful soul and a

dance that is nearly aligned with nature in order to draw it out... The purpose of dancing is to enhance the strength of the soul to the utmost limit, thus drawing out its full might...

The knowledge regarding terpsichores flowed through his head.

Before long, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

He had fully assimilated the knowledge regarding the 1-star Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art.

In other words, even if he were to take the examination at this very instant, he would be able to clear the 1-star terpsichore examination easily.

The prowess of a terpsichore was highly dependent on their soul, and Zhang Xuan had cultivated his soul to be beyond ten meters large. The level that others could hardly reach in their life, he could achieve it as easily as merely eating or drinking.

Drawing his consciousness out of the Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan noted that the student was still busy looking for her book and had no intentions of leaving yet. Thus, he moved on to study the 2-star Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art.

While martial artists wield their battle techniques, and terpsichores wield their terpsichorean arts. Terpsichores essentially aim to utilize their art form as a weapon for murder. The world trembles beneath a dance, and in the next moment, a soul perishes. The dance serves as a medium for terpsichores to engage in soul attacks...

Reading the content in the book, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but nod in agreement.

Terpsichorean arts, just like the soul techniques of soul oracles and the Impartation of Heaven's Will, were offensive techniques for dealing with souls. But different from the others, terpsichores utilized their dance as a medium to amplify the effectiveness of their offense.

... Since it serves as a medium, does it mean that, once one reaches the very peak, one will be able to engage in powerful soul attacks even without using the dance as a medium?

As Zhang Xuan continued to read on, a certain line appeared before him.

Engage in powerful soul attacks even without using the dance as a medium? Does that mean... the Swordless Realm? Zhang Xuan thought in agitation.

He might not know much about terpsichorean arts yet, but he did have some mastery in the field of swordsmanship. Based on what he knew, if one were to cultivate their swordsmanship to the peak, they would be able to utilize even a blade of grass or a pebble by the roadside as a sword. Going further, they might even be able to execute the full prowess of a sword art without a weapon in hand.

That was to say, the sword only served as a medium in order to execute the techniques. Even without a sword in hand, one could still execute a sword art, perhaps even more fluidly, completely, and agilely.

What Zhang Xuan was reading was very unlike the knowledge imparted in the conventional books that terpsichores read. His road of cultivation was directed toward the ultimate endpoint—for the swordless to surpass any sword, for the formless to surpass any form.

Reading on...

"...Terpsichorean arts aim to utilize movements as a medium to engage in soul attacks. In essence, even walking and the slightest gestures could be considered as movements, so they could, as well, be considered as terpsichorean arts..."

"A true terpsichore dances not with a routine set of movements but with even the most casual of gestures..."

...

Before long, Zhang Xuan was done browsing through the book.

He closed eyes to slowly savor and comprehend the knowledge he had just taken in.

Geji! Geji!

Crisp echoes sounded from his soul as a new world unfolded around him.

2-star terpsichore, reached!

Continue!

The more Zhang Xuan studied, the more excited he became. Thus, he went on to finish the remaining books as well.

Four hours later, he was done browsing through all of the books and assimilating their knowledge.

As if his massive soul had been tempered, it looked much more transparent and purer.

Terpsichores utilize their dance as a means to beguile, enchant, attack, or even kill the soul of another... Even though Zhang Xuan had never learnt terpsichorean arts before, he had comprehended the most profound and innate essence of the occupation. Currently, his knowledge regarding the occupation was unmatched by anyone beneath 7-star.

If he were to take the examination at this very moment, he would definitely qualify for 6-star pinnacle.

I finished the books much faster than I would have before! Zhang Xuan thought.

In the past, it would have taken him at least twelve hours in order to learn another occupation from scratched to 6-star pinnacle.

However, he did it with terpsichore using only six hours.

Where is that student? Standing up, Zhang Xuan glanced around

the room to search for the female student who was in the library with him, and he suddenly froze.

The vast Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion was empty, and not a single person was in sight.

The heck! When did she leave? Widening his eyes in shock, Zhang Xuan nearly fainted.

He had been too immersed in his cultivation that he hadn't noticed that the student whom he had followed in had already left!

As the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion required Academic Credits to enter, there was rarely anyone in it. From his arrival last night until now, this student was the only one who had entered the premises. Now that she was gone, how was he supposed to leave the area?

Was he going to be locked in there for several days straight?

Zhang Xuan felt a tinge of helplessness.

What the heck was this! If only he'd known, he wouldn't have immersed himself so deeply into his cultivation.

It's nothing much for me to be confined here, but my body is still in the vicinity. If someone were to find it, I will be in deep trouble...

As a soul, he was highly indiscernible and was unaffected by the mechanisms and formations governing the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion, so being trapped here wasn't too much of an issue for him.

The problem was his body.

Even though he had hidden it in the best spot he could find, it would be a stretch to say that it would be able to hide from the discerning eyes of the many master teachers of the Terpsichore School for extended periods of time, especially in the day.

It would be a calamity if he were to be found by anyone.

Seeing that it was already nearing noon, Zhang Xuan could no longer hold himself back any longer. He rushed up to the door, hoping to find a gap or any other openings which he could escape through.

However, after circling around the entire Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion, he could only sigh deeply in frustration.

Looks like there really is no way for me to escape...

The mechanisms and formations set up in the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion were extremely powerful, and it was impossible for anyone to force them open.

If Zhang Xuan's physical body was there, he could've compiled a book on them just by touching them, and exploiting its flaws, he would have been able to escape easily.

Incapable of touch, however, his soul was unable to do so.

His Eye of Insight was currently too weak to see through the formation and mechanisms as well... Was he doomed to continue waiting helplessly here until someone arrived?

Zhang Xuan's eyes twitched as helplessness washed over him.

Forget it, I will just continue to wait. Surely there will be someone who will visit the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion by the end of the day...

Since Zhang Xuan was unable to find a better solution to his dilemma, he could only resign himself to fate. Just as he was about to find a place to bide his time, 'jiya!', the doors suddenly creaked open.

Hmm? Someone is here?

Not expecting that someone would arrive that quickly, Zhang Xuan leaped up in excitement. He hurriedly rushed behind the doors to hide as he waited for an opportunity to rush out of the library.

Hu!

A resplendently dressed lady carrying a graceful disposition walked into the room.

After stepping across the threshold, she was just about to walk toward the shelves when her eyebrows suddenly knitted together. She glanced at the direction where Zhang Xuan was hidden and howled, "Who is it? Come out!"

Sensing her gaze on him, Zhang Xuan's body stiffened in tension.

It should have been hard for anyone to notice him in his soul form, especially since he was lying dormant in the corner. Yet, the other party had actually noticed him instantly. How could that be?

A Saint realm expert? Zhang Xuan's eyes narrowed warily.

There was only one possibility for this—the other party was a Saint realm expert!

With the breakthrough to Saint realm, one would gain a certain level of comprehension regarding the nature of space. Even though Zhang Xuan had concealed his presence well, his disguise was not perfect due to the limitations of his cultivation. For one, the flow of spiritual energy where he was standing would be slightly disturbed due to the presence of his soul, thus betraying his presence.

"What? You aren't going to come out?" Frowning deeply, the lady harrumphed coldly as she raised her palm and grabbed toward the space where Zhang Xuan was situated.

Hong long!

A sudden burst of zhenqi abruptly froze everything in place. Zhang Xuan felt an immense pressure strangling him, threatening to dissipate his soul.

As big as his soul was, it only possessed the cultivation of Transcendent Mortal 5-dan pinnacle. That was far from matching

up to a Saint realm expert!

They were two completely different levels!

Escape!

Knowing that he would die if he were to allow the other party to do as he pleased, he immediately drove his cultivation, and with a powerful burst of strength, he managed to barely break free of the other party's restraint. Without any hesitation whatsoever, he rushed right for the doors.

Hong long!

The movement of his immense soul disturbed the spiritual energy in the surroundings, stirring up a burst of wind in the surroundings

"This is... a soul?" The lady's face turned grim.

While she did sense a presence in the room, she'd only thought that it was someone who had used some kind of technique or ability to conceal their presence. She'd never even considered the possibility that it would be a soul.

Soul oracles had already vanished several dozen millennia ago. For one to suddenly appear in the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion... where could he have come from? And what was he up to?

"Where do you think you are going..." With a sharp shout, the lady darted forward to grab the escaping soul.

Hong long!

With a Saint realm expert exerting her full might, the space within several thousand meters was immediately sealed in place.

This is truly bad...

After barely darting out of the library, Zhang Xuan was just about to escape into the air when the area around him suddenly turned incredibly viscous. It was as if he had fallen in a marsh. As much as

he tried, he just wouldn't move.

Is this the ability of Saint realm experts, 'Zhenqi Spatial Lock'?

Zhang Xuan stiffened tensely.

Chapter 771: The Foolish Deeds of the Body

Saint realm experts possessed the ability to seal space, leaving those who were within the area of its effect feeling as if they had fallen into an ocean of mud. Limited by the spatial lockdown, they would only be able to utilize a tenth of their original movement speed and strength.

This ability was known as Zhenqi Spatial Lock, and only Saint realm experts were able to overcome it.

With an awful look on his face, Zhang Xuan gritted his teeth and continued trudging forth.

However, with his speed being reduced to a tenth under the effects of the Zhenqi Spatial Lock, his speed was barely any different from that of a snail.

"Trying to escape me? Dream on!" With a light harrumph, the lady flicked her fingers thrice toward Zhang Xuan.

Peng peng peng!

A powerful shockwave engulfed the area around Zhang Xuan, and he immediately felt a stifling sensation in his chest. His massive soul trembled uncontrollably as a splitting headache assaulted his consciousness. It felt as if he was going to lose control of his body at any moment.

A soul attack... Zhang Xuan thought with a grave expression.

With three simple flicks, the lady was able to inflict grievous injuries upon Zhang Xuan's soul. Considering her skillful use of the soul attack, she must be one of the upper echelons governing the Terpsichore School, perhaps an elder or even higher.

I must return to my body this very instant or else I might really end up being killed by her... A chilling sensation swept over Zhang Xuan as he realized the dire situation he was in.

If it had been any other Saint realm expert he was dealing with, and this was inclusive of the Ten Great Master Teachers such as School Head Mo and School Head Zhao, it would have been difficult for the other party to wound his soul.

Due to the soul's intangibility, it couldn't be hurt by physical means. Only those who wielded soul offense techniques could possibly inflict damage upon a soul.

To Zhang Xuan's misfortune, the person he was facing was an upper echelon of the Terpsichore School, which meant that she had a thorough understanding of souls. To such a person, erasing his soul from existence was no difficult feat.

If his soul were to dissipate, that would be complete and utter death. There would be zero possibility that he could come back to life.

There was no way he could survive the attacks of a Saint realm terpsichore as a soul, so the only chance he had at surviving this ordeal was to return back to his physical body.

This would reveal the location of his body, but he had no other option at the moment.

After all, this was a much better alternative than having his soul dissipated on the spot.

Bearing the excruciating pain his soul was in, he rushed right for the tree at the courtyard, where his body was located. However, before he could get far, he heard yet another harrumph beneath him. "You still wish to continue on?"

Huala!

The lady raised her palm and thrust it at the air several times.

An overwhelming force tore through space and struck Zhang Xuan. For an instant, Zhang Xuan felt as if he had been struck by a comet, and his soul flipped several times in the air, nearly ripped apart by the sheer force of the attack.

It was fortunate that his large soul had allowed him to distribute the immense force across his soul body, thus reducing the severity of the damage he sustained. At the same time, as a cultivator of the Heaven's Path Soul Art, his soul energy was particularly pure, granting exceptional resilience to his soul. Otherwise, he would surely have been killed under the blow.

But even though he had managed to survive the attack, he still felt as if someone had attempted to tear his soul into two, and the wounds on his soul had worsened as well.

Knowing that he would surely die without fail if the other party were to continue attacking, Zhang Xuan intended to make another charge for his body behind the tree when an idea popped into his mind, and he held himself still.

The might of the other party's attack was more than sufficient to kill any ordinary soul oracle. It was only due to the immense size and exceptional resilience of his soul that he was able to remain intact.

If he were to attempt another charge for his body, the other party would surely sense his presence and be astounded by the durability of his soul. In response to that, she would execute an even stronger attack against him. If this were to happen, regardless of how big or resilient his soul was, the only fate awaiting him was death.

But... if he could make the other party think that she had managed to kill him, he just might be able to escape with his life...

As expected, when he paused in the air and manipulated his soul to emulate a dissipated soul, the lady looked visibly relieved.

Sensing the lack of movement in the air, the lady suddenly recalled something, and her face darkened.

"Soul oracles betrayed humanity back then, opting to become a weapon for the Otherworldly Demons. For one of them to appear here at this moment... could it be related to that incident? If that's

the case, I shouldn't have killed it immediately..."

Countless years ago, the soul oracles and their heritage were wiped clean from the face of the earth by the Master Teacher Pavilion. If anything related to them was still existent in the world, the chances were that the Otherworldly Demons were involved in the matter as well.

For a soul oracle to appear right after the incident at Leiyuan Peak, no matter how she looked at the matter, it was impossible for the two incidents to be unrelated!

Realizing that she had allowed a potential clue leading her to Byzantium Helios Beast slip through her fingers, she couldn't help but regret her impulsive actions.

At this instant, the lady suddenly recalled something.

"Wait... if that person is a soul oracle, why would he try to escape from the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion at this time? But if he isn't a soul oracle, what else can he be?"

Soul oracles were of the yin attribute, which made them highly vulnerable to yang energy. As a result, they dared not appear in broad daylight, or else they would be putting themselves at risk of being seared by the sun rays.

Even if they managed to survive the exposure to the sun rays, they would be in for a round of excruciating pain and a sharp decline in their cultivation afterwards due to the Searing Yang Decline.

Considering how that the other party had rushed out as soon as he found an opportunity to do so, he clearly did not fear the sun... Could that mean that he wasn't a soul oracle?

But if that was the case, what else could he be?

As a Saint realm expert, she knew that the world was far larger than she could ever imagine. There were many unique occupations with mystical means that ordinary cultivators could hardly

fathom. Even with her broad knowledge base, she dared not outright refute the possibility of anything.

For example, she had heard of a species of saint beast known as the Weakscaled Beast. It was a massive beast with an exterior as dark as ink, making it a conspicuous existence no matter where it went. However, as soon as it stepped into water, its body would immediately turn completely transparent, as if it was invisible.

Could the fellow she had just encountered be such a lifeform as well?

This was a plausible hypothesis as well.

Otherwise, no matter how powerful a soul oracle was, a human's soul couldn't possibly expand to be beyond ten meters large, right?

That would be sheer insanity!

Upon that realization, the lady's eyes suddenly widened in astonishment. "Damn it, that would mean that fellow is feigning death!"

If her enemy was truly a soul oracle, there was little doubt that her soul attack would have ripped the other party apart. However, if her enemy was a saint beast instead, it would be likely that it would possess thick and tough skin that granted it superior defenses. If so, it was unlikely that her soul attack would have been able to kill the other party.

In other words... there was a good chance that the other party was feigning death!

"Trying to fool me? Don't even think about it!"

With a livid expression, the lady raised her leg and stomped forcefully on the ground.

Hong long!

The earth immediately shook intensely as waves of zhenqi surged into the surroundings as if searing heat waves.

She noticed it?

For a moment, Zhang Xuan had thought that he'd managed to fool the other party. However, upon hearing those words, he realized that his deception had failed. Left with no choice, he was just about to attempt another dash for his physical body when one of the branches of a certain tree abruptly shook...

Putong!

A corpse-like figure suddenly fell face-down from the tree, creating a huge depression on the ground.

Upon seeing the sight, Zhang Xuan nearly fainted from utter horror.

Who else could that figure be if not his body!

He'd thought it would be safe to hide his body amidst the trees, but that lady's attack had caused the trees to sway, resulting in his body falling from its hiding spot.

It was just a few moments ago that he was still thinking that even though his soul had been discovered, as long as his body remained hidden, he would still be safe. After all, considering the fact that souls were intangible, it was impossible to see their true form without the Eye of Insight. Thus, as long as his soul could flee for the time being, returning only after the storm had cleared to fetch his body, he would be able to get away scot-free.

However, with his body faceplanted in the ground right before the other party, his identity was already compromised. There was no way he would be able to remain in the Master Teacher Academy anymore!

"Who are you?"

While Zhang Xuan was feeling so frustrated that he could spew blood, the lady howled in astonishment and immediately raised her palm to strike the fallen body.

Hong long!

A violent torrent of zhenqi that harnessing destructive might fell upon Zhang Xuan.

Now that her attention is away from me, I should make use of this opportunity to return back to my body...

Knowing that this was the only chance he was going to get, Zhang Xuan gritted his teeth and immediately rushed for his body. But at that moment, his faceplanted body abruptly placed its palms against the ground to push itself up before flitting away swiftly.

Its speed was so fast that its movements were a blur.

Heaven's Path Movement Art!

This is... Mind of Void...

Upon seeing the sight before him, Zhang Xuan's soul swayed weakly. If souls could faint, he would probably have fainted there and then.

Having comprehended Mind of Void, his body could move instinctively in times of danger even if its soul was not in it.

Realizing the immense might behind the other party's palm, his body gauged that it wasn't the other party's match, so it immediately fled so as to avert the danger.

Looking at the distant back of his body, Zhang Xuan nearly burst into tears.

The heck!

If you had just waited a split second longer, I would have already freaking returned back to my body! Think of what an awkward situation you have left me in...

Furthermore, with the speed you are fleeing at via the Heaven's Path Movement Art, how am I to catch up with you?

Zhang Xuan's soul was only at Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle

whereas his body possessed the cultivation of Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle. Pair that with the Heaven's Path Movement Art and Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps... If his body were to flee with all its might, the distance between them would only grow further and further!

Screw this!

"You scoundrel, where do you think you are running off to?"

Seeing the young man who had fallen from the tree running away, the lady nearly exploded from fury. Pushing against the ground, she soared into the sky and pursued the fleeing figure.

With the incredible speed Zhang Xuan's body was traveling at via the Heaven's Path Movement Art, even the lady had to dash with all her might in order to keep up with him.

Hurry up and catch him!

Seeing the lady rushing for his body, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. The next moment, however, a bizarre expression appeared on its face as what he had just asked for dawned on him.

The hell!

To be cheering when another was attempting to capture his body... There was just some kind of inexplicable peculiarity to the situation.

This was all that foolish body's fault! If not for it, why would he be in such a dilemma now?

Wait a moment... If my body is caught, it will be even more difficult for me to slip back into it...

After a moment of depression, Zhang Xuan suddenly realized that even if his body were to be caught, the lady would never allow his soul to slip into his body. Thus, he immediately rushed off to chase his body as well.

However, the next sight he saw left him dumbfounded. His body

was crashing through wall after wall as it fled with all its might.

Calm down, stop doing that! Zhang Xuan bellowed within as he watched the sight before him with an aching heart.

All actions conducted under the effects of Mind of Void was instinctive, so it was impossible for it to conduct precise movements like a living human. Even so, to be crashing straight through walls, that was a little over the top!

You are supposed to save me from danger, not to leave my body bruised all over!

Even if you get out of this situation alive, if you leave my body mortally wounded in exchange, what good will you have done?

"You better stop right there!" Just as Zhang Xuan was wallowing in self-pity at his unfortunate plight, the lady ahead of him caught up to his body. With a flick of her hand, several surges of zhenqi gathered and sealed the space around his body, forming an invisible cage around it.

Peng! Peng! Peng!

Sensing the immense threat looming over it, his body executed the Heaven's Path Fist Art in an attempt to break open the cage. However, with just a total might of 16,000,000 ding from his zhenqi cultivation and physical body, it was impossible for him to break the zhenqi cage constructed by a Saint realm expert.

Knowing that the other party wouldn't be able to break free of her Zhenqi Spatial Lock, the lady turned to the figure before her and asked with a sharp glint in her eyes, "Who are you? Why were you snooping around the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion?"

Peng peng peng peng!

Naturally, Zhang Xuan's body, driven only by its instincts, was unable to answer the question. It continued striking the cage frenziedly, creating loud sonic booms.

"You are courting death!"

Seeing that the other party actually dared to snub her, the lady's face flushed crimson in rage. She raised her hand, and a destructive force swiftly gathered on her palm.

From the looks of it, if the figure before her continued to remain silent, she would simply kill him.

Mind of Void was an ability that only the most powerful soul oracles possessed. However, with the disappearance of the soul oracles and their heritage, the knowledge regarding Mind of Void had vanished as well. This was the reason—despite being a Saint and a 6-star pinnacle master teacher—the lady was unable to tell that the figure standing before her was just a soulless body incapable of speech.

If my body is smashed into minced meat, it will be of no use even if I do get it back...

At this moment, Zhang Xuan finally arrived at the scene. Seeing that the lady preparing her hand to smash his body into pieces, his soul nearly dissipated from fright. Not daring to waste a single second, he immediately dived straight through the cage and into the glabella of his body.

Unlike the Zhenqi Spatial Lock, the zhenqi cage didn't harness the spatial laws of the world and could only block physical beings. It couldn't interfere in the passageway of a soul at all.

As soon as his soul entered his body, he immediately saw immense energy gathered on the lady's palm that was on the verge of landing on him, so he hurriedly had his body stop whatever he was doing. Clasp his fist, he spoke resoundingly, "Elder, thank you for helping me suppress my inner demons, sparing me from the fate of going berserk..."

Chapter 772: Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe

The reactions his body made was simply too unnatural that he could only attempt to pass it off as his inner demons acting up. Otherwise, there was no other way he could explain his unnatural actions.

Naturally, he couldn't talk about Mind of Void either as it was intricately linked with the soul oracles.

As for the soul the other party noticed earlier, as long as he adamantly denied it, there was no way the other party could investigate the matter and trace it back to him.

"Inner demons?"

As expected, upon hearing those words, the lady in the sky dissipated the violent energy in her hand. However, given that she didn't dispel the zhenqi cage, it seemed that she still carried some doubts towards Zhang Xuan's words.

From the looks of it, it seemed that she was intending to hear Zhang Xuan's story out, but if she were to detect any falsehood in his words, she wouldn't hesitate to kill him.

"Indeed. I am a freshman of this academy, and I was intending to enter the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion to read up on some books so as to prepare myself for the terpsichore examination. However, on my way here, an inspiration suddenly struck me, and in order to prevent others from interrupting me, I can only hide on a tree for the time being..." Zhang Xuan explained.

"Sudden inspiration?" The lady frowned.

Cultivators did have moments of sudden enlightenment from time to time, and they disappeared as abruptly as they appeared. Thus, it was important for one to muse over it as soon as possible so as to not allow it to slip their minds. For this purpose, the

academy had built innumerable gazebos all over the academy so as to allow students to rush in and focus their attention on developing their sudden inspiration.

If that fellow really had a sudden stroke of inspiration, it wouldn't be too far-fetched for him to hide in the midst of the trees for fear of being interrupted.

"What is the relationship between you and the thing hiding in the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion then?"

But of course, just because it was logical didn't mean that it was necessarily true. Ultimately, this was just a one-sided story from the other party. She wasn't ready to believe it so easily.

It was just a moment ago that she spotted an uninvited guest within the library, and the next moment, this fellow fell from the tree. It was difficult to believe that the both of them weren't related!

"Pardon me, but I am not very sure what elder is asking me. I was in the midst of pondering about the details regarding the [Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe] 1 when a stroke of inspiration hit me, but due to a slight mistake I made, my cultivation almost went berserk. I have only recovered from my berserk state just a moment ago, so I'm not too sure what has happened in between..." Zhang Xuan replied sheepishly.

It was best for him to feign ignorance and deny his involvement vehemently right from the start. Once it was established that he was involved in the incident, the matter could potentially spiral out of his control.

"Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe? That is a grade-6 terpsichorean art that only 6-star terpsichores are able to comprehend. What is a freshman like you pondering over it for? Are you taking me for a fool?" The lady harrumphed in displeasure.

The fellow before her was seemed to be only in his early twenties, and he had also just said for himself that he was a freshman of the academy. Yet, he also said that he was musing over a grade-6 terpsichorean art. It was obvious that there was a clear contradiction in his words, so it was inevitable that she would get even more suspicious of him.

Thus, she began gathering power in her palm once again, ready to make a move should the other party fail to come up with a good explanation for his words.

But on the other hand, seeing that he had managed to divert the other party's attention away from the appearance of his soul in the library, he heaved a sigh of relief within. After which, he flicked his wrist and took out an emblem, "Even though I am a freshman, I am a 6-star blacksmith as well. Thus, it shouldn't be too bizarre for me to be musing over a grade-6 terpsichorean art, right?"

"6-star blacksmith?" Seeing the six shining stars on the emblem, the lady frowned.

The emblems were made out of a special material, making it impossible to falsify them. In other words, the other party was truly a 6-star blacksmith.

Blacksmith was one of the Upper Nine Paths occupations. Considering that he was even able to achieve such heights as a blacksmith, it shouldn't come as too much of a surprise for him to be musing over a grade-6 terpsichorean art.

"Yes. The Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe is one of the stronger grade-6 terpsichorean arts, and if executed well, it can even beguile a Saint realm expert, leaving him deep in a trance. However, after analyzing it for some time, I realized that despite the impressive prowess of the technique, it has several conspicuous flaws that need to be corrected."

Seeing that he had managed to capture the other party's attention, a faint smile crept onto Zhang Xuan's lips as he

continued, "Firstly, just as the name 'Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe' suggests, the technique requires resplendent clothes and accessories in order to maximize its effectiveness. However, if you were to find yourself placed in a dangerous position abruptly and a battle was imminent, would your opponent give you time to change your clothes and accessories to prepare for battle? This is the greatest flaw in the technique I have found so far. Next, even though the terpsichorean art is indeed enchanting, it hasn't reached the level where one is unable to guard against it. On top of that, the soul energy consumption for the dance is enormous, making it extremely exhausting for the terpsichore executing the technique as well. In other words, if the technique were to fail to work on your enemy, there is a good chance that you might already be too drained to fight any longer, thus making it a double-edged sword. This is the second flaw..."

"... This is the third flaw!"

"... This is the fourth flaw!"

...

"... This is the seventeenth flaw!"

Word shot out from Zhang Xuan's mouth like a machine gun, leaving the other party no chance to interject at all. In a mouthful, he pointed out seventeen flaws in the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe.

There was a detailed introduction to this terpsichorean art in many of the books in the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion. He had glanced through them momentarily, so he had a clear idea regarding their content. Thus, it wasn't too difficult for him to dig up those flaws.

If he wanted to pull the other party's attention away from the matter regarding the soul entirely, he would have to dominate the conversation so as to dictate the flow of the conversation.

The Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe was one of the more common terpsichorean arts used by 6-star terpsichores, so Zhang Xuan knew that he would be able to shock the other party by pointing out their flaws. Judging from the shocked look on the other party's face, he knew that he had succeeded.

"You managed to analyze... so many flaws in the terpsichorean art?" The lady could hardly believe her ears.

She had often used this terpsichorean art herself, but even she hadn't noticed these flaws at all. Yet, the young man before her actually pointed all of them in a single breath, so it was inevitable that she would be shocked.

As a 6-star terpsichore, she was sufficiently proficient in the occupation to conclude swiftly that there was no mistake with the other party's analysis regarding the flaws of the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe at all!

To be able to see what even she had neglected... Just what kind of eyes did the fellow before her possess? Could he really be here to take the terpsichore examination?

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Do you have any proposed solutions for the flaws you have listed?" Hearing the confidence in Zhang Xuan's voice, the lady couldn't help but ask.

"I wasn't too sure before, but my sudden inspiration has given me some insight into the problems. I might be able to solve some of them now." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"The first problem I have raised is that the clothes worn must be resplendent. However, I believe that it is a misinterpretation of the technique. The main focus of the terpsichorean art lies in the 'Rippling' and not the 'Cloud Robe'. What that truly draws people in is not the beautiful clothes but the ripples flowing through them with each movement. Take me for example, even if I were to

execute the technique in my plain clothes, its offensive ability is still not one to sneeze at..."

As Zhang Xuan spoke, he raised his arm and lightly shook it.

Weng!

Zhenqi flowed across his sleeves, creating layer after layer of ripples on it. In an instant, it was as if a stone was thrown into a lake, bringing life and harmony to the once stagnant water.

Despite the young man's ordinary wear, under the effects of the harmonious ripples, she was still put under the illusion as if he was dressed like a majestic deity of the heavens. In an instant, the beautiful aesthetics permeated deep into her soul, bringing her inexplicable pleasure.

His disposition and exterior changed in just a split instant, as if the dirty beggar from a moment ago had turned into the charming prince in a night banquet.

Unwittingly, she found herself delving deeper and deeper into a trance.

She quickly shook her head to regain her senses, and it was only then that she realized that the other party's motion had already stopped. The other party was still wearing the same old clothes, as if nothing had happened at all.

"Impressive!" The lady's heart jolted in astonishment.

As a 6-star terpsichore, she had always been the one to charm others. Yet, the other party managed to make her lose herself momentarily despite his humble clothes. Most likely, his understanding of terpsichorean arts had already far surpassed her, reaching a level she had always dreamed of.

Seeing the shock on the other party's face, Zhang Xuan knew that he had already succeeded in convincing the other party about his identity, and he heaved a breath of relief. With a light chuckle, he continued, "As for the second flaw regarding the high soul energy

consumption of the technique, as long as one were to drive his soul energy in such a manner, one will be able to avoid..."

Given his current proficiency as a terpsichore, it wasn't too difficult for him to resolve the flaws in the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe.

That terpsichorean art was highly demanding on the soul energy consumption, making it extremely damaging to the terpsichore executing the technique as well. However, if the terpsichore were to drive her soul energy using his circulation method, she would be able to lower the soul cultivation expended to less than a third while enhancing the might of the technique by a significant amount as well.

"Th-this..." Hearing the formula, the lady swiftly did some calculations, and her eyes slowly widened in disbelief.

She had just given the soul energy circulation formula a brief try just a moment ago, and she realized that the other party was right!

Not only did the fellow before her revolutionize their understanding of the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe, he even enhanced the efficiency of the technique immensely as well!

"As for the third flaw..."

Amidst her shock, the other party continued on proposing the solutions to the problems he had listed.

The fourth flaw, the fifth flaw, the sixth flaw...

In a few moments, he had proposed unique solutions to resolving all seventeen flaws he had listed!

"If we were to implement the changes you have proposed to the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe, its prowess will be boosted by more than twofold. If I were to execute it, I would be able to even beguile a Saint 2-dan expert, rendering him helpless in battle..." The lady felt her throat dry up, and her body stiffened from the sheer agitation she was feeling.

How could someone with her eye of discernment possibly not notice how valuable and fearsome the revised Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe was?

To be able to list out seventeen flaws and resolve them impeccably... Despite his young age, the fellow before her possessed an understanding of terpsichorean art that was far beyond her imagination!

"This is all I have just gotten from my inspiration regarding the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe. I hope that this will be useful in perfecting the technique. If there is anything else that you are unsure of, feel free to ask me. I will try to answer everything within my means!" Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

Forced to a corner, he had to apply the knowledge he had just learned on the spot. Otherwise, considering how even ten of him wouldn't be a match for a Saint realm expert, it wasn't too difficult to imagine how tragic his outcome would be.

Fortunately, everything seemed to have turned out well.

"It just happens that I do have some problems I wish to consult you on. It is regarding the Fleeting Fragrance Terpsichorean Art. Every time I attempt to cultivate it, I will feel a heavy and stifling sensation in my heart. May I know if there is any way I can resolve the issue?" The lady hesitated for a short moment before asking.

There were indeed some issues regarding the cultivation of her terpsichorean art that had confounded her for some time. Considering how the fellow before her was able to further refine the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe, perhaps he might be able to resolve the problems she was facing?

"Fleeting Fragrance Terpsichorean Art... Are you referring to the technique created by 6-star Terpsichore Zui Linglong three thousand years ago?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Indeed!" The lady nodded.

"The Fleeting Fragrance Terpsichorean Art can stir one's soul and produce a fragrance that reaches up to ten li away, inviting birds and bees to dance in joy to it. It is one of the most advanced grade-6 terpsichorean art, possessing immense power. If you feel a heavy and stifling sensation in your heart upon its execution, if my deduction fails me not..."

Frowning deeply, Zhang Xuan paused for a brief instant as he assessed the lady before him before asking, "You haven't been in love before, have you?"

"I... That's right." The lady shook her head.

She had dedicated her life to the terpsichore, spending her time doing nothing but cultivate. Never had she met a man who had caught her eyes, so naturally, she hadn't had the opportunity to fall in love as well.

"That's indeed the problem! Zui Linglong created the Fleeting Fragrance Terpsichorean Art in the days when she first came to know love. Innocent and pure, she and her lover and vowed to spend their days together until their hair loses its color and their lives come to an end. This terpsichorean art consisted only of a few simple movements, but it reflected her expectations for the blissful life ahead of her. You have never been in love before, so it will be hard for you grasp this kind of emotions. As a result, your intent is not aligned with your dance, and forcefully executing it will only cause you to suffer injuries instead!" Zhang Xuan explained.

"Alright, why don't I modify this terpsichorean art for you to remove this flaw. If you wish to learn it..."

With a light chuckle, Zhang Xuan turned to the other party and said:

"I can teach you!"

Chapter 773: Poor

"Teach me?" The lady's eyes lit up.

The Fleeting Fragrance Terpsichorean Art was currently the strongest technique she possessed, but she had never been able to successfully cultivate it. If she could master the technique after its modification, it would surely augment her fighting prowess significantly.

Zhang Xuan contemplated for a moment before saying, "That's right. The core of this terpsichorean art lies in its intent. Even though you have never experienced the deep anticipation in wanting to spend your life together with a person you deeply love, you have experienced the loneliness and determination in striving for excellence in your cultivation. Even though that is a different emotion from the former, it doesn't pale in its intensity. If you can tap on it, you will still be able to draw out immense power from the terpsichorean art."

"I ask of you to enlighten me!" The lady clasped her fist and bowed.

From their previous conversation, she could already tell that the other party's understanding of terpsichorean arts far surpassed hers.

Master teachers believed in taking the proficient as their teacher. Even though she was a Saint realm expert, it wouldn't be a humiliation for her to humbly seek guidance for the doubts she was facing from someone weaker than her.

"Okay!" Seeing the other party's polite attitude, Zhang Xuan nodded in commendation.

A true master teacher should always remain humble and prepared to learn from the strengths of others, regardless of how young or weak they might be.

After a moment of contemplation, Zhang Xuan reshaped the Fleeting Fragrance Terpsichorean Art to fit the intent the other party was capable of drawing out. He reconfirmed the feasibility and effectiveness of the technique before imparting it to the other party.

Hearing the details of the revised Fleeting Fragrance Terpsichorean Art, the lady slowly went through every part of it so as to better comprehend the technique, and the astonishment on her face gradually increased. Realizing that the technique imparted to her was tailored to her needs, she turned to the other party with eyes filled with awe.

The lady hurriedly dispelled the zhenqi cage around Zhang Xuan, clasped her fist, and earnestly apologized, "Pardon me, I was reckless..."

If she had been thinking that the other party intended to steal something from the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion earlier, such a thought had already vanished from her mind by this moment.

While the collection of books in the library was beneficial to most students and teachers, it was already no longer useful in advancing her proficiency as a terpsichore.

Since it was useless to her, considering the fact that the other party's comprehension of the terpsichorean art was even deeper than hers, what could possibly interest him in there?

It seemed like the young man before her really had nothing to do with that fellow she had found hiding in the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion earlier. The entire matter was just a coincidence.

"May I know how I can address you?" Having thought this matter through, the lady's attitude became much politer than before.

"Elder, you are too polite. I am Zhang Xuan, a freshman who has

just enrolled at the academy!" Zhang Xuan quickly replied.

"Zhang Xuan? You are Zhang Xuan?" Taken aback, the lady's eyes slowly widened into huge circles.

"You know me?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Of course, you are the student whom School Head Mo proactively wanted to take under his wing and School Head Zhao wanted to acknowledge as his junior... These two matters have spread like wildfire amongst the teachers in the academy! I would have to be living under a rock to not have heard of it..." the lady said with a bitter smile.

This freshman had broken far too many records right after his arrival. While he might still be little known amongst the student populace, he had already caused a massive stir amongst the teachers.

Never in the history of the Master Teacher Academy had there been a student who had earned the favor of two school heads, only to reject the both of them flatly.

"I thought that Zhang Shi only possesses outstanding talent in beast taming and smithing, to think that your understanding of terpsichorean arts has reached such astounding depths as well..." the lady said with eyes gleaming in admiration.

She had tried looking into Zhang Xuan's background at one time, and according to the rumors, he had a teacher who was sufficiently capable to even offer pointers to Pavilion Master Mo.

How could such an outstanding figure possibly intend the Terpsichore School harm? There was no benefit that the Terpsichore School could offer him.

Thus, it could only mean that she had wronged him.

"Elder, you are too courteous. The study of terpsichorean arts is deep and expansive, I have barely scraped the surface!" Zhang Xuan quickly replied.

Each occupation that had withstood the test of time was powerful and profound in its own right. Even though Zhang Xuan had gained a deep understanding of terpsichores over the past few hours, it was just the tip of the iceberg of the entire occupation. As such, his words were not just humility.

The lady nodded. "To be able to remain humble despite your achievements, it is no wonder School Head Mo and School Head Zhao have such a high opinion of you!

"My name is Wei Ranxue, and I am an elder of the Terpsichore School. Honestly speaking, your mastery as a terpsichore is far above mine, so you need not address me as elder; just 'Little Wei' will do. I might have more problems regarding terpsichorean arts that I will require your advice on in the future, so I will be in your care." Since the other party had offered her valuable guidance, he could be considered as half a teacher to her.

As such, despite her older age and higher cultivation, she couldn't accept Zhang Xuan addressing her as 'elder'.

"Alright then." Seeing the other party's earnest expression, Zhang Xuan could only nod in agreement.

In truth, such a situation was nothing much.

This was somewhat similar to the relationship between him and Luo Qiqi. Despite the latter's higher cultivation and older age, she still addressed him as teacher nonetheless.

This was one of the master teacher traditions, taking the proficient as one's teacher, as well as an acknowledgement of a master teacher's desire for knowledge.

Recalling the matter beforehand, Wei Ranxue turned to look at Zhang Xuan thoughtfully.

"Zhang shi, I seem to recall you saying that you are here to take the terpsichore examination... Does that mean that you don't have an emblem yet?"

"I have been learning my terpsichorean arts from my teacher all along, so I haven't had a chance to take the terpsichore examination yet," Zhang Xuan said.

"You have never taken the terpsichore examination? This is no problem at all. Unlike those Upper Nine Paths occupations, where one has to go through all kinds of examinations in order to obtain their emblem, with my testimony that your comprehension of terpsichorean arts is beyond mine, I will apply for a 6-star terpsichore emblem for you right now and deliver it to you later!" Wei Ranxue chuckled.

The ranking system amongst the Upper Nine Paths was much stricter, and one had to go through all kinds of examinations in order to advance a rank. At the same time, there was a rigid prerequisite on one's cultivation realm as well.

Even though terpsichores were one of the ten supporting occupations taught in the Master Teacher Academy, it was a Lower Nine Paths occupation. As such, it didn't have requirements as strict as the others. As long as Wei Ranxue served as a guarantor of his abilities, she would be able to apply for a 6-star pinnacle terpsichore emblem for him straightaway, thus sparing him the trouble.

"Thank you for this..." Not expecting the other party to volunteer to help him apply for the 6-star terpsichore emblem, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up, and he immediately clasped his fist in gratitude.

Once the application passed, he would have two 6-star supporting occupations. Four more and he would be able to take the 6-star master teacher examination.

"You're too polite!" Wei Ranxue replied. With a smile on her lips, she invited, "If Zhang shi doesn't mind, do you want to take a seat in the Terpsichore Hall? I wish to learn more about your insights regarding terpsichorean art!"

"That... With my current state, I think I shall not impose on you.

Furthermore, I have only just recovered from my berserk state, so I will need to rest for a moment..." Zhang Xuan said as he glanced at his muddied clothes.

His body was first face-planted into the ground before bashing through innumerable walls in an attempt to escape. He had also been injured by the other party's soul attack, thus leaving him with both internal and external injuries. Therefore, he needed to return to his residence to recuperate from his wounds.

"Ah, pardon me for my discourtesy..." It was only at this moment that Wei Ranxue recalled that the other party had just gone berserk a moment ago, so she immediately apologized in embarrassment.

"I'll be bidding farewell now then!" Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan turned around and walked away.

The Terpsichore School was severely lacking in male students, and considering that it was already noon, it was inevitable that Zhang Xuan would catch the gazes of many as he walked amidst the crowd. However, he couldn't care less at the moment.

Rushing forward, he soon returned back to his residence in the Elite Sector.

"Teacher, you are injured?"

As soon as Zhang Xuan walked into the room, Luo Qiqi immediately walked up to welcome him. However, upon seeing his unkempt look, she froze in shock.

"Don't worry about it, it's not a problem at all. I'll go take a rest first." Too exhausted to explain, Zhang Xuan pushed open the doors to his room and walked in.

His physical wounds weren't a problem. By circulating his Heaven's Path zhenqi, he would be able to recover from the swiftly. The main problem lay with his soul.

He had taken several heavy blows from a Saint realm expert,

leaving his soul with a feeling as if it had been ripped apart. If not for the extraordinary resilience of his soul, it might have already dissipated by now.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan took out a high-tier spirit stone from his storage ring.

Without any hesitation, he began driving his cultivation technique, and pure spiritual energy began flowing from the high-tier spirit stone into his body, mending his injuries.

The wounds on his soul were more difficult to treat than his physical injuries. Even with the Heaven's Path Soul Art and a high-tier spirit stone, it still took him some time.

Only after relentless effort over four hours did his soul finally regain the glow and power it had before.

Recalling the various matters that had happened today, a feeling of helplessness couldn't help but wash over Zhang Xuan. I really should be more careful the next time I wish to browse through books!

He had been thinking of taking all of the books in the Master Teacher Academy into his Library of Heaven's Path and leave the empire, but it seemed like this thought was far too naive.

For one, there were many restrictions imposed on the libraries throughout the academy. Even as a soul, it wouldn't be easy for him to enter or leave those areas.

It was fortunate that he had read the Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art up to 6-star beforehand, allowing him to convince the other party that he wasn't there to cause any harm. But there was no guarantee that he wouldn't be caught before he was done reading through the books the next time, or that the person he encountered would be as patient and rational as Wei Ranxue.

"Forget it, I should focus on cultivating my soul first!"

In the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion, Zhang Xuan had managed to compile two Heaven's Path Soul Arts. Now that his soul energy had recovered, it was about time for him to start cultivating.

The higher his soul cultivation was, the faster he could browse through the books, and the better he would be able to conceal himself from others.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan took his clone out and imparted the simplified versions of the Heaven's Path Soul Art to him as well.

Constructed out of a God artifact, his clone possessed an incredibly resilient body. His core weaknesses came mainly from his low zhenqi and soul cultivation realm.

Due to the lack of a suitable soul cultivation technique, his soul cultivation realm had been stuck at Consonant Spirit realm for quite a long time.

Since Zhang Xuan had managed to obtain the next two dans of the Heaven's Path Soul Art, it was best for them to cultivate together. After all, his clone was also a part of his fighting prowess as well.

Zhang Xuan and his clone drew their souls out of their bodies simultaneously, and holding a high-tier spirit stone each, they began to drive their zhenqi according to the cultivation technique they had.

Pure spiritual energy flowed into their souls, and the aura they exuded swiftly grew stronger and stronger.

After an unknown period of time...

Hong long!

With a sudden jolt, both of their souls achieved a breakthrough,

reaching Cosmos Bridge realm.

However, they didn't stop cultivating there.

Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage!

Cosmos Bridge realm intermediate stage!

Cosmos Bridge realm advanced stage...

An hour later, both Zhang Xuan and his clone's souls reached Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle simultaneously.

Even though his clone was cultivating the simplified version of Heaven's Path Soul Art, his rate of cultivation was able to remain on par with the main body due to it being nourished by the Nine Hearts Lotus over an extended period of time.

Kacha!

Just as they were about to strive for a higher realm, with a 'kacha', the high-tier spirit stones in their hands abruptly shattered into dust.

Both the souls of the main body and the clone were ten-meters tall, so the spiritual energy required for them to achieve a breakthrough was significantly higher than normal souls as well. As a result, one high-tier spirit stone was only barely enough for them to advance from Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle to Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle.

"Continue!" Zhang Xuan said through gritted teeth.

If advancing to Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle would take him a high-tier spirit stone, it was hard to imagine how many more he would require in order to reach Perfect Harmonization realm or even higher.

Exhaling deeply, Zhang Xuan took out the remaining eight high-tier spirit stones he had and split them equally between him and his clone.

"Let's start!"

Drawing his soul out once more, Zhang Xuan resumed his cultivation.

Spending one high-tier spirit stone, he managed to make the breakthrough to Perfect Harmonization realm.

Spending yet another one, he reached Perfect Harmonization realm intermediate stage.

Before long, he was done consuming all four high-tier spirit stones, and his cultivation stopped at Perfect Harmonization realm advanced stage. To think that even four high-tier spirit stones wouldn't be sufficient for him to reach pinnacle!

Isn't this rate of consumption a little... way too high?

Looking at the powdery remains of the ten high-tier spirit stones which he had gathered with great difficulty, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel incredibly frustrated.

He was only at Perfect Harmonization realm, but the rate of consumption of spirit stones was already astounding. Without a doubt, the number of spirit stones he would require would only increase exponentially. Where in the world was he supposed to gather that much money?

He'd thought that he had already become a little tycoon with ten high-tier spirit stones in his possession, but in the blink of an eye... he was poor once again!

Chapter 774: Hu Yaoyao's Invitation

Origin Heavy Water costs ten high-tier spirit stones per bottle. I need ten bottles to cultivate the Third Incandescence of Quintuple Incandescence Golden Body, so in other words, I require a hundred high-tier spirit stones!

Considering that I have expended four spirit stones cultivating from Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle to Perfect Harmonization realm advanced stage, in order to reach pinnacle, I will need two high-tier spirit stones or perhaps even more. Beyond that, Ethereal Treading realm, Chrysalis realm, Half-Saint... The number of high-tier spirit stones will only increase exponentially. Without at least a hundred high-tier spirit stones, I won't be able to go far...

Zhang Xuan's head began aching.

It seemed like his wish of reaching Saint realm within ten days was nothing more than a pipe dream at this point.

Putting everything aside, just the lack of spirit stones was already a huge problem in itself.

I really should start finding a way to earn more money... Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in distress.

It was clear that he would need to find a stable source of income, but several hundred high-tier spirit stones was no small sum.

It would be hard to find a viable solution at a whim.

I should take a look at how much I have progressed for the time being...

He could slowly contemplate the issue regarding earning money in the future. For the time being, he looked inward in order to assess his current strength as a result of the recent breakthroughs.

With his soul reaching Perfect Harmonization realm, his strength had soared once more, leaping from 3,200,000 ding to 10,000,000

ding!

Factoring in the 8,000,000 ding he could harness from both his physical body and zhenqi cultivation, he had a maximum of 26,000,000 ding at his disposal, putting him on par with a Chrysalis realm primary stage expert!

(Chrysalis realm primary stage 25,000,000 ding, intermediate stage 28,000,000 ding, advanced stage 31,000,000 ding, pinnacle 34,000,000 ding!)

It must be said that the rate at which he was growing was truly frightening.

Zhang Xuan turned to his clone and noted that the latter had also stopped at Perfect Harmonization realm advanced stage.

Noticing Zhang Xuan's gaze on him, his clone's eyes gleamed in excitement. "Shall we have a duel?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head awkwardly. "Ah... I'll pass..."

Even though his clone's cultivation was mainly derived from his soul, his physical body was simply too powerful; it would be a grave mistake to gauge his strength just by his soul cultivation alone. Furthermore, it seemed his physical body was gradually growing stronger as he advanced his soul cultivation.

With Zhang Xuan's current strength, he could easily defeat opponents with higher cultivation realm than him. But even so, he was still a far way off from matching with that fellow.

If he were to challenge the other party to a duel, there was not a shadow of a doubt that he would be utterly crushed.

It was already extremely embarrassing that he, as the main body, was unable to defeat his clone. Why would he intentionally ask for a beating one top of that?

Returning his clone to his storage ring, Zhang Xuan pushed open his door and walked out.

As he made his way to the main hall, Luo Qiqi suddenly walked up to him and greeted him.

Zhang Xuan had already changed into a fresh set of clothes. With the advancement of his soul cultivation, his eyes seemed to have grown a little profounder, and his aura had become more indiscernible, creating an unfathomable aura around him.

"Teacher, Senior Hu Yaoyao has just sent a letter over inviting you to a night banquet," Luo Qiqi said as she assessed Zhang Xuan with doubtful eyes.

Yesterday, when her teacher had returned injured in the afternoon, she'd thought that it was a result of a confrontation with Hu Yaoyao while trying to get the location of Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence out of her... But considering the fact that Hu Yaoyao had sent an invitation letter to them just a moment ago, that possibility could be eliminated.

The chances were that her teacher hadn't met Hu Yaoyao outside of the first meeting.

But if that was the case... where did he go the previous night?

And who was it that injured him?

"Night banquet? What night banquet?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback by those words.

Was Hu Yaoyao already going to make her move against him?

"Here, take a look at this!" Luo Qiqi raised her hands to pass an envelope over.

Zhang Xuan took the envelope from her hands and opened it.

Contained within the envelope was an invitation letter, and putting aside the pleasantries written, the content was mainly speaking about how she'd felt a strong affinity with them when they'd met the previous night. Therefore, she'd decided to extend an invitation to them for her night banquet, and she hoped that

they wouldn't turn down her goodwill.

The address was the Terpsichore School, Cloud Sparrow Lodge.

"Cloud Sparrow Lodge?" Zhang Xuan asked questioningly.

"That is Senior Hu Yaoyao's private residence. It is located within the Terpsichore School!" Luo Qiqi explained.

Fearing that her teacher wouldn't understand, she further elaborated, "The Elite Sector is divided into four subsectors, namely D, C, B, and A, which correspond to Grade-1, Grade-2, Grade-3, and Grade-4 students respectively. Grade-5 students don't reside in the Elite Sector. Instead, outstanding Grade-5 students can have private residences constructed for them in the school of their main supporting occupation. Naturally, the location and facilities of those private residences are far better than those in the Elite Sector!"

Zhang Xuan nodded.

He had heard it from Huang Xing and the others when he first arrived at the Elite Sector.

Of the four subsectors, he was currently living in Sector D.

Sensing the scent of a scheme from this matter, Luo Qiqi said with a frown, "Teacher, the other party refused our request yesterday, but she still chose to send us this abrupt invitation letter today. I fear that she is up to no good..."

"There is no doubt that she is up to no good. However, if we don't go, it will be impossible for us to locate Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence," Zhang Xuan analyzed calmly.

Hearing those words, Luo Qiqi could only nod in agreement with a bitter smile on her face.

If there was another way around this matter, they would have already made a move. However, with the other party holding the vital information they required, they could only play along with

her games.

"Since that's the case, what is there for us to hesitate about? Since she has invited us to a night banquet, we will just have to head over to take a look!" Zhang Xuan said.

He had headed over to the Hu Yaoyao's residence in the hope of sounding her out, but in the end, due to the other party abruptly stripping, he could only abandon his original intention.

It was just a matter of time before they would have to confront one another. This night banquet might be a trap prepared for him, but it was also an opportunity to get the location of Wu Yangzi's old residence out of her.

Naturally, Zhang Xuan wouldn't give this chance up so easily.

He was severely lacking money at the moment. If he could find Wu Yangzi's treasure, he might be able to free himself from the troubles he was facing.

Hearing her teacher's decision, Luo Qiqi made up her mind as well and asked, "Then... should we head off now?"

"Now?" Zhang Xuan glanced at the sky, and only then did he realize that the sun had already set.

It was already afternoon by the time he returned from the Terpsichore School, and his recuperation and cultivation had taken him around five hours or so. As a result, by the time he was done, the sky was already pitch black.

"Let's head off then!"

It was already about time for the night banquet to start, so they had to make haste.

Leaving the residence, the duo headed straight for the Terpsichore School.

While the Terpsichore School wasn't as large as the Blacksmith School, its size was still nevertheless impressive. It took some time

before the duo arrived at the courtyard where Zhang Xuan had seen Hu Yaoyao stripping last night.

"So, this is the Cloud Sparrow Lodge..." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Based on what he had seen yesterday while following Hu Yaoyao, the residence was much more majestic and larger than the surrounding residences and those in the Elite Sector as well.

"This residence wasn't called the Cloud Sparrow Lodge initially. According to the rumors, back when Senior Yaoyao was taking the 6-star terpsichore examination, she wore a magnificent dress and performed the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe. Her dance was so alluring that it attracted the excited chirping of the visiting Cloud Sparrows, and their calls resounded for a very long time even after the dance had ended... In commemoration of that event, this residence was renamed the Cloud Sparrow Lodge," explained Luo Qiqi via zhenqi telepathy, knowing the story behind the name.

Zhang Xuan nodded in respond.

The Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe did possess such astonishing capability when paired with resplendent clothes. It could easily beguile humans and beasts alike, sending them into a feverish state.

Cloud Sparrow was a small savage beast that possessed minimal fighting prowess. However, it was a connoisseur of art, and its excited chirping could be considered the greatest applause and recognition to a dancer.

"That matter solidified Senior Hu Yaoyao's standing in the Terpsichore School, and even the head of the Terpsichore School accepted her as her direct disciple!" Luo Qiqi continued.

The head of the Terpsichore School was naturally one of the Ten Great Master Teachers as well. Being the direct disciple of such an incredible figure, little had to be said about Hu Yaoyao's standing in the Master Teacher Academy.

This was also one of the reasons the Bewitching Devil Faction had grown to become one of the largest factions in the academy with innumerable followers.

At that moment, 'jiya!', the doors to the Cloud Sparrow Lodge creaked open, and the lady whom Hu Yaoyao had addressed as Xinru yesterday night walked out and clasped her fist respectfully.

"The two of you must be Zhang shi and Luo shi, right?"

As Zhang Xuan had been too focused on Hu Yaoyao the previous night, he'd neglected the lady before him. However, standing at such proximity to one another, he realized that her cultivation had reached a fair level as well.

Transcendent Mortal 8-dan pinnacle expert.

With this, she could probably be considered as one of the top experts amongst the Grade-4 students.

Yet, she was still ordered around as a subordinate in Hu Yaoyao's residence. It seemed Hu Yaoyao's influence was greater than he had initially thought.

"We are!" Luo Qiqi replied.

"Faction Leader Yaoyao has instructed me to escort you in, please follow me!" With a graceful smile, Xinru turned around and led the way.

Following behind her, Zhang Xuan and Luo Qiqi stepped into the Cloud Sparrow Lodge.

As Zhang Xuan had been too engrossed in following Hu Yaoyao's trail and avoiding the eyes of others last night, he hadn't thought much about the residence. Strolling through it leisurely now, however, he realized that the residence was enormous! It was at least seven times larger than his residence in the Elite Sector.

In the courtyard, there was a pond in which many koi fishes were swimming to and fro. Beautiful flowers were cultivated in the area,

and they exuded a light but refreshing fragrance.

Furthermore, there seemed to be a Spirit Gathering Formation constructed beneath the residence. The spiritual energy in the area was even more concentrated than that in the Elite Sector. Even if an ordinary human incapable of cultivating were to live in this residence, their body would be nourished by the concentrated spiritual energy, leaving them energized and invulnerable to most common illnesses.

"This way!" Xinru gestured with her hands.

After walking through a long corridor, walking across two small bridges in between, they finally arrived at the main hall.

The interior of the main hall was brightly lit, as if it were daytime.

"There is no one inside?"

Stepping into the main hall, Zhang Xuan scanned the room, and he was surprised to see that it was devoid of people.

There were small wooden tables laid out for both the host and the guests in the vast room, and they were filled with fine wine and food. However, the person who had invited them, Hu Yaoyao, was nowhere in sight.

"Faction Leader Yaoyao has some urgent matters to deal with, so she had to leave for a moment. She will be back very soon, so she instructed me to lead you to the main hall to take a seat first," Xinru explained with a smile.

"I see!"

Based on the conversation he had overheard yesterday, Zhang Xuan knew that Hu Yaoyao intended to deal with him. Most probably, her absence was also a part of her plan as well. Knowing that it would be futile for him to probe deeper, he shrugged the matter off with a smile.

After which, he and Luo Qiqi walked over to the two empty guest seats and sat down.

Zhang Xuan had to admit that the other party did make ample preparations for this night banquet. The dishes on the table were all top-grade delicacies made of the meat of valuable spirit beasts. With just a sniff, one would immediately start salivating.

Just this table in itself is probably already worth several hundred middle-tier spirit stones. As expected of the leader of the Bewitching Devil Faction, she sure is rich... If I really find myself in need of money, perhaps I could find some way to shake some out of her... Zhang Xuan thought as he stroked his lower jaw.

It was just a moment ago that he had gone bankrupt, so such extravagance felt exceptionally stinging on his eyes.

Since that fellow could spend several hundred middle-tier spirit stones just on a meal itself, she should surely have some money to spare for a poor man like him?

"Enjoy your meal, I will take a look at how our faction leader is doing..." Xinru walked up to their table and poured them a cup of wine before backing out of the main hall with a courteous smile.

"Teacher, what do you think she's trying to do?" Looking at the lavish spread before her, Luo Qiqi was bewildered.

"Regardless of what she is up to, I will make her reveal the location of Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence today. Don't worry!" Zhang Xuan replied confidently.

If it had been a day ago, he would have been hesitant to speak such words.

However, after a night of studying at the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion, he was now a 6-star terpsichore whom even Wei Ranxue was in awe for. No matter what Hu Yaoyao was up to, he was confident that he would be able to deal with whatever she was going to throw at him.

If it came down to it, he could even utilize his terpsichorean art and beguile her to resolve the situation.

"Alright." Luo Qiqi was still a little apprehensive inside, but she still nodded in response.

She had no idea where her teacher's confidence came from, but since he dared to utter such words, he must have an idea in mind!

Chapter 775: Luo Qiqi Faints

After chatting casually for a moment, silence gradually returned to the room. As Zhang Xuan raised his wine cup, he activated his Eye of Insight and scanned the room discreetly.

A moment later, a slightly perplexed expression flickered momentarily across his face.

Other than the Spirit Gathering Formation, there was no other formation or mechanism that he could see through his Eye of Insight.

Didn't Hu Yaoyao intend to deal with him?

Why hadn't she prepared anything then?

Did she really think that she could subdue him without any preparation?

Just as Zhang Xuan was in deep thought, Luo Qiqi suddenly called out. "Teacher, look over there!"

Turning his sights to the direction her finger was pointing toward, Zhang Xuan saw a two-meter tall weapon rack with a slightly yellowish shield hanging on it. There were slight traces of patina, which hinted at the long history behind it.

"It is probably just a decorative artifact," Zhang Xuan replied

Judging from the design of the weapon, it was probably smithed as an ornament. It wasn't uncommon for large clans to hang such items in their main hall in a display of power.

"I have read many books regarding Elder Wu Yangzi, and according to the records, he smithed a total of 124 weapons in his life, and 17 of them are shields. One of them, the 'Blazing Moon Copper Shield', has a bizarre fiery moon design, and it resembles that of this shield," Luo Qiqi said with a frown.

"Blazing Moon Copper Shield?" Hearing those words, Zhang

Xuan began examining the shield more carefully.

Even though it was quite a distance away from them, with their keen eyes, they could still easily see the fiery moon reminiscent of the sun inscribed onto it. Unlike ordinary shields, it also had an irregular hexagonal shape. On the whole, the shield seemed exceedingly queer.

Realizing the significance of Luo Qiqi's words, Zhang Xuan asked agitatedly, "You mean that... this is a shield smithed by Elder Wu Yangzi?"

"Yes!" Luo Qiqi stood up and walked toward the corner of the main hall and began examining the shield carefully.

The more she studied the shield, the grimmer her expression became.

Still in his seat, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to the shield as well. While the shield was ancient, it had an extremely complex workmanship that, based on Zhang Xuan's comprehension of smithing, bore a striking resemblance to that of the Zither Forging Technique.

Eye of Insight!

Lines of insight rippled in Zhang Xuan's eyes as the information regarding the shield appeared before him.

This was indeed left behind by Elder Wu Yangzi... Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

He'd thought that it was only an imitation, but the evidence was pointing to it being authentic.

"It is said that Elder Wu Yangzi smithed the Blazing Sun Copper Shield in remembrance of his late wife, so he never put this artifact up on sale before. Many thought that it had disappeared along with him, but to think that it would actually be here," Luo Qiqi exclaimed in shock.

Clenching her fists tightly, she continued, "It seems Senior Yaoyao really does know where the old residence is. There is a high chance that she might have unearthed it from there!"

Zhang Xuan also shared the same thoughts as Luo Qiqi.

Since this shield had never been put on sale before, there was a high chance that it had been hidden in Wu Yangzi's old residence, and Hu Yaoyao had managed to find it by some stroke of luck.

After examining the shield, Luo Qiqi was just about to return to her seat when she abruptly froze again.

"There's also a sword here!"

On the wall not too far away from them hung a sword in its scabbard. A weapon rack had hindered her view of it from her seat, so Luo Qiqi hadn't noticed it previously. It was only after walking up to the shield that she managed to get a clear view of the sword.

Just like the shield, the sword hilt and scabbard also carried traces of age on it. With just a single glance, one could tell that it was an ancient artifact. Walking up to the sword to assess it, Luo Qiqi's frown deepened.

Eventually, she took it down from the wall.

Luo Qiqi wasn't the type to take the possession of another easily. For her to take the initiative to step forward to take down the sword, it could only mean that she had noticed something peculiar about it. Knowing this, Zhang Xuan asked, "What? Was this sword smithed by Wu Yangzi as well?"

"Yes. If I'm not mistaken, this should be the 'Blazing Moon Blade' that Elder Wu Yangzi left for his daughter. This sword has also never been sold on the market before. If there is a fiery sun inscription on the blade, that would mean that my deduction is correct," Luo Qiqi explained as she placed her hands on the scabbard and the hilt each and pulled.

Huala!

A chilling glint flashed from the body of the sword, sending a shiver down the spines of those in its vicinity.

"A good sword that is!" Zhang Xuan exclaimed.

Even though this sword wasn't on par with his Glacier Rain Sword, it was still an incredible creation that had managed to reach Spirit pinnacle.

"There's indeed a fiery sun!" With her eyes fixated on the sword, delight surfaced on Luo Qiqi's face.

But before her delight could bloom into a smile, a light buzz sounded from the sword.

Weng!

The sword trembled violently, as if the spirit within it was protesting in fury.

"This is bad!" Hearing that sound, Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes. He hurriedly stood up and rushed up to her, but despite his swift reaction, he was still a step too late.

As if sapped of her strength, Luo Qiqi's figure abruptly staggered and fell weakly to the side.

Zhang Xuan immediately caught Luo Qiqi's falling figure and placed his forefinger and middle finger on her wrist to feel her pulse. A moment later, he heaved a sigh of relief.

Thank goodness there isn't anything wrong with her. It seems she has only lost her consciousness...

Fearing that Hu Yaoyao would suddenly spring something on them, Zhang Xuan had chosen to remain in his seat and wait patiently for whatever was to come and deal with them. He'd thought that the other party would resort to using formations and mechanisms against him, but who could have known that she would spike the sword instead?

Knowing that Luo Qiqi was fine, Zhang Xuan tapped on a few

points of the sword first before grabbing the Blazing Moon Sword to examine it.

There is no poison on it. It seems Luo Qiqi was indeed attacked by the spirit within the sword instead. Still, to think that this sword would have the ability to jolt one's soul!

Most formidable artifacts would possess some kind of unique ability. Take the Bronze Gong that Zhang Xuan had seen in the Spirit Emporium previously for example, it had the ability to destroy one's soul.

With a strike of the gong, one's physical body and soul would suffer immense damage.

From the looks of it, the Blazing Moon Blade did possess the ability to jolt one's soul. It was out of a moment of carelessness while touching it that Luo Qiqi was attacked by the spirit within, resulting in her loss of consciousness.

Realizing what was going on, Zhang Xuan gently placed Luo Qiqi down on the table by the side before harrumphing coldly.

"Come out!"

While artifacts did possess offensive capability of their own, their fighting prowess was severely limited without someone driving them. It was just like how he'd managed tame almost all of the treasures of the Spirit Emporium, but he was still unable to rival Wei Changfeng.

Even though the Blazing Moon Blade had reached Spirit pinnacle, making it difficult for even a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert to tame the spirit within, it was still impossible for it to render Luo Qiqi unconscious so easily.

Without a doubt, Hu Yaoyao had tampered with the weapon.

The other party knew that they were anxious to seek out Wu Yangzi's old residence, so she intentionally placed the shield there in order to draw their attention to it first. After confirming that

the shield was safe, and due to the shock from the discovery of another product of Wu Yangzi's hands, their guards would be down when they approached the sword, thus allowing it to successfully knock them out.

Hu Yaoyao's intended target was probably Zhang Xuan, but Luo Qiqi had ended up falling for it instead.

Given that such a trap had been prepared for them, the other party must have been hiding in the surroundings, observing them quietly from the shadows.

There was a brief moment of silence before a soft chuckle echoed in the room.

"No wonder you were able to deal a heavy blow to nearly all of the student factions, you are indeed a smart person!"

The door opened, and Hu Yaoyao's slender figure stepped into the room. She was dressed in a burgundy dress which emphasized her curvaceous figure beautifully.

It seemed she had devoted more effort to dressing up for this occasion. She looked much more charming and seductive than the previous day.

"For a Grade-5 student to pick on a freshman, don't you think that this will reflect badly on your reputation?" Zhang Xuan glanced at her figure impassively.

"My reputation? I invited you to my night banquet out of goodwill, but in my moment of absence, you took my sword without permission. Don't you think that the one whose reputation will be reflected badly is you?" Hu Yaoyao stepped forward leisurely and chuckled.

A slight and refreshing fragrance drifted from her body, tingling one's senses.

It was no wonder her faction was known as the Bewitching Devil Faction. As if a mischievous fox spirit, her gestures and

movements carried a kind of seductive charm and pulled at one's heartstrings.

It wasn't too difficult to imagine that there would be an army of master teachers in the academy who would be willing to throw themselves into flames without batting an eyelid for her.

But while this kind of deadly charm might be effective on others, Zhang Xuan remained completely unfazed by it. Shaking his head, he gazed at Hu Yaoyao nonchalantly, as if merely looking at yet another human being.

"It is out of curiosity that we stepped forward to admire the artifacts you have put on public display; why should that reflect badly on us? On the other hand, despite inviting us over, you chose to hide and observe us from the shadows. I don't think that it can be any more apparent who is the one who is up to no good.

"But since we won't be able to come to a consensus on the matter, let's not waste our breath and get straight to the business at hand. Where is Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence?"

"Hmm?" Hu Yaoyao was slightly taken aback.

On top of being a 6-star terpsichore, Hu Yaoyao was a 6-star demonic tunist as well. At her current level of expertise, she was already capable of utilizing her voice as a medium to unleash her prowess as a demonic tunist.

Right from the start, she had been using a terpsichorean art and a demonic tunist art simultaneously to bewitch Zhang Xuan. Under such an assault, even a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan expert would find it difficult to retain their rationality!

Given that the other party was only a Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator, even if he wasn't bewitched by her, his soul should have at least been rendered feeble by the attack. How could he possibly remain completely unfazed and even rationally question her back?

"Regarding the matter of the old residence, I will speak as long as

you agree to my conditions!" Despite Hu Yaoyao's doubt, she didn't allow it to appear on her face.

With a seductive smile that scratched at one's soul, she said, "Join my Bewitching Devil Faction and obey my commands obediently, and not only will I tell you the location of Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence, I will even lead you there myself!"

"Obey your commands obediently?" Zhang Xuan glanced at her somewhat mockingly. "Aren't you already trying?"

"To be able to tame several hundred spirit beasts in a breath and win School Head Mo and School Head Zhao's favor, there is no doubt that Zhang shi possesses an exceptionally powerful soul. Even if I were to use all of my means, it is questionable they will be effective on you... It won't be feasible for me to make you submit through my terpsichorean arts, I admit at least this much."

At this point, Hu Yaoyao's crimson lips curled up playfully. "But... what about Luo Qiqi?"

"Qiqi? What do you mean?" Zhang Xuan frowned upon hearing those words.

"Luo Qiqi has been attacked by the spirit of the Blazing Moon Blade. If you don't treat her soon, it's very possible that the damage to her foundation might become permanent, making it nigh impossible for her to make any progress in the future," Hu Yaoyao replied with a taunting smile.

Damage to her foundation? Permanent? Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

A jolt on one's soul could only render one unconscious at most. Damaging one's foundation and rendering it nigh impossible for one to make any progress... Where in the world did she find the confidence to spout such bullshit?

Zhang Xuan was perplexed for a moment before it suddenly dawned on him.

The other party must have thought that he was lacking in the study of souls, and on top of that, his worry for Luo Qiqi could have sent his mind into disarray, making it impossible for him to think rationally. She thought that, by exaggerating things, she could force Zhang Xuan to submit to her terms.

On the off chance that Zhang Xuan refused, she could have prepared a Record Crystal somewhere in advance to take down this scene. When Luo Qiqi finally roused from her sleep, she would show it to her and sow discord between them. With such a precedent between them, there would be a permanent rift between their relationship as a teacher and a student.

This was indeed checkmate. Zhang Xuan would have been trapped no matter what he chose.

To save Luo Qiqi, he would have to agree to her conditions. Disagree, and he would potentially lose Luo Qiqi's trust forever.

Regardless of the choice, she would be the final victor!

As expected of the leader of the Bewitching Devil Faction, she was indeed a fearsome adversary!

Chapter 776: Bewitching Devil!

That's a good plan, but it's a pity that she found the wrong opponent! With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

It must be said that Hu Yaoyao had indeed planned this well. Anyone who was ignorant of souls would be in a state of panic at this moment, forced to choose one of the two options. However... this problem was nothing for Zhang Xuan at all.

As a soul oracle, the true master in the study of souls, he could think of at least a dozen ways off the top of his head to wake Luo Qiqi from her sleep instantaneously.

The only reason he hadn't done so yet was to see what Hu Yaoyao had prepared for him. It would be truly disappointing if this was all she'd got.

With this much, how could she possibly declare that she would take him down so confidently last night?

Zhang Xuan shook his head and said with a tinge of disappointment in his voice, "Save petty ploys like that for others. Are you actually so naive to think that you can ruin our teacher-student relationship through this?"

He and Luo Qiqi were comrades who had survived a life-and-death situation together. How could such a cheap ploy possibly foil their relationship?

"You are smarter than I thought. However..." Realizing that Zhang Xuan had seen through her thoughts, a hint of astonishment flashed across Hu Yaoyao's eyes. However, the smile on her face only deepened.

In the next moment, she abruptly reached out her hand and flicked lightly.

Si la!

A surge of sword qi shot forth from her fingertips, and severed the cloth concealing the unconscious Luo Qiqi's shoulder, revealing her smooth shoulder and neck bone.

"If Luo Qiqi were to wake up to this and realize that her teacher actually harbors some lustful thoughts toward her, do you think that she will still be able to remain as trusting of you as before?" Hu Yaoyao chuckled.

"Even if she doesn't doubt your character, I can just take the recording of this scene and spread it amongst the students of the academy, saying that you intend to make sexual advances toward Luo Qiqi... I wonder if the students will be more inclined to believe my words or yours. Honestly speaking, I am curious to see how many fans of Luo Qiqi will stand up in her stead!"

Zhang Xuan frowned.

If Hu Yaoyao were to really take a snippet of the recording and frame it in a suggestive manner, considering the Bewitching Devil Faction's influence in the academy, it wouldn't be too difficult for her to turn the student populace against him.

While Zhang Xuan had no qualms about being misunderstood, such rumors could ruin Luo Qiqi's reputation as well.

Naturally, this was a situation Zhang Xuan wanted to avoid.

"I intended to give you a chance, but you just had to keep pushing your luck..." Zhang Xuan shook his head and sigh.

The next moment, he raised his hand, lifting it to his forehead.

It was a simple action, reminiscent of the gesture one would make when adjusting one's fringe. But for some reason, the movement felt extremely natural and graceful, as if a dance performance.

Hu Yaoyao thought that the young man before her would start to panic helplessly before her, but upon seeing this gesture, she froze.

Hong long!

The next moment, an overwhelming pressure gathered and rushed for her soul, inducing tremendous dizziness in her head.

Damn it, this is a terpsichorean art! How can he possibly know any terpsichorean arts? Hu Yaoyao's face paled under the pressure, and she nearly lost consciousness.

As one of the top students of the Terpsichore School, she had intended to make use of her terpsichorean art to pressure the other party into submitting to her. However, before she could succeed, she was already struck squarely by the other party using the same method she was going to use against him! The immense frustration she felt from being outdone in her field of specialty left her on the verge of spewing blood.

However, considering the limitations of the other party's cultivation, no matter how strong his soul might be, it would be impossible for him to leave her dizzy for too long. As soon as she recovered, she would make him regret his actions!

Vowing angrily, Hu Yaoyao was just about to focus her soul energy to dispel the dizziness in her mind when she suddenly felt a searing energy gushing right for her.

"To dare assault me, you are courting death!"

Realizing that the other party was attempting to launch an attack on her in her weakened state, Hu Yaoyao strenuously lifted her palm to retaliate.

Based on the intelligence she had received, Zhang Xuan was only a Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle cultivator. Even in her moment of weakness, it was impossible for him to subdue a Chrysalis realm pinnacle expert like her!

At Chrysalis realm, one's power would have crystallized into the form of a golden core, granting them strength almost reaching up to that of a Saint. How could she possibly be defeated by a Cosmos

Bridge realm cultivator in a fight?

Hu la!

Just as her palm was about to clash with Zhang Xuan's attack, she suddenly felt the assault before her vanish with a slight gust of wind. The next moment, she suddenly felt yet another immense might gathering behind her.

How did he withdraw his attack so quickly? Narrowing her eyes, Hu Yaoyao's heart leaped in shock.

In her moment of weakness, it had already taken all she had to focus all of her might to protect her front.

She could clearly feel a violent strength reminiscent of the raging torrents of a river rushing for her, but with her reaction dulled by vertigo, it was impossible for her to retaliate on time.

Peng!

Struck squarely on her back, Hu Yaoyao's face paled as her entire figure catapulted forward before crashing heavily onto the ground.

Pu!

Blood spewed from her mouth. In this short encounter, she had already sustained grievous wounds.

Feeling her internal organs being jolted from their original position, Hu Yaoyao was overwhelmed with shock. "The strength he commands is on par with a Chrysalis realm primary stage cultivator? How is that possible?!"

There was no doubt that the other party's palm carried a might exceeding 25,000,000 ding. Otherwise, given the resilience of her body as a Chrysalis realm expert, even if she was caught off guard, it was impossible for her to be wounded so heavily.

Wasn't the other party a Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle cultivator?

Yet, not only did he manage to successfully assail her soul, he was

even able to command a might of 25,000,000 ding... Just how in the world did he do it?

Another mouthful of fresh blood spurted by Hu Yaoyao's mouth. The next moment, she felt someone lifting her body up, and her body immediately tensed in alarm.

Soon, as the dizziness she felt began to dispel, she got a clear sight of the situation before her.

At this moment, she was being held up by Zhang Xuan, who was looking at her with a frustrated expression.

His expression seemed to be saying that he didn't intend to make a move at all, and she was the one who forced him into resorting to physical violence.

Seeing this, Hu Yaoyao's slender figure trembled once more, and yet another mouthful of fresh blood spewed from her mouth.

She was a Grade-5 student, a Chrysalis realm expert... She should have been the one teaching the other party a lesson...

Yet, at this very moment, it seemed as if she was a mischievous student who was taught a lesson after being caught pranking someone instead...

Can anyone tell me how in the world everything suddenly came down to this?

To think that she, one of the top Grade-5 students in the academy, would end up being utterly subdued by a freshman in the academy. The immense frustration she was feeling at this moment from the stark contrast between expectations and reality left her on the verge of going insane.

"Spew out the location of Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence, and I can drop everything that has happened today!" Zhang Xuan said impassively.

With Zhang Xuan's mastery of terpsichorean arts, which was on

par or even higher than most 6-star pinnacle terpsichores, and his extraordinarily powerful soul, it wasn't impossible for him to assail Hu Yaoyao's soul while she was unguarded.

After which, by exerting the incredible might of 26,000,000 ding he commanded from his body, soul, and zhenqi, it wasn't too difficult for him to overpower the weakened Grade-5 genius.

If Zhang Xuan wanted to, he could even have killed the other party easily!

"Humph!" Hearing the threat in the young man's words, Hu Yaoyao sneered coldly.

At this point, she had already recovered from her shock, and she taunted with a provocative smile, "So what if I don't spew out the location of Elder Wu Yangzi's old residence? What can you do about it? Are you going to kill me for it?"

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan frowned.

Despite all that Hu Yaoyao had done, her actions didn't warrant death.

On top of that, putting aside the fact that she was a master teacher and that they were in the Master Teacher Academy which prohibited killing amongst fellow students, just the fact that it might be possible that what Hu Yaoyao had claimed was true—that she was the only one who knew where Wu Yangzi's old residence was—made it an unwise decision to kill her.

If they were to really kill her, it was possible that they might never be able to find Wu Yangzi's treasure anymore.

"Of course, I won't kill you for something as trivial as this. However... I can seal your acupoints and hang you on a flagpole so that everyone passing by can admire the embarrassing state of the leader of the Bewitching Devil Faction!"

Throwing Hu Yaoyao on the ground, Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back and glanced down at her coldly.

Are you trying to compete with me who can be more shameless?

Hah, you must be joking with me!

When I was at the peak of my shamelessness, you were still playing in the mud!

"You dare..." As expected, upon hearing those words, Hu Yaoyao's smile vanished, and her face turned livid.

To be honest, she'd thought that she was already quite a brazen person herself, but to think that this fellow would be even more brazen than her!

One must know that she was one of the top beauties in the academy, and a slight smile or a small gesture could send butterflies fluttering in the stomach of another.

There were many men who would be more than willing to do anything to please her, but not only did this fellow beat her up mercilessly, he even wanted to hang her on a flagpole...

Screw you!

"You can try me if you want to," Zhang Xuan replied coldly.

"You..." Hu Yaoyao glared at Zhang Xuan furiously with gritted teeth.

Considering how the fellow before her had caused such a huge uproar in the academy as soon as he had arrived—destroying the Passageway of Records in the Blacksmith Guild and provoking the four biggest school factions in the academy...

She might still harbor some doubts if it was anyone else, but this fellow... she could totally see him doing it!

Putting everything else aside, she could still feel a stabbing pain in her organs from the heavy blow on her back.

Considering how he was able to strike her so heavily without any hesitation, it shouldn't come as a surprise that he would hang her on a flagpole.

But to submit to a freshman... Impossible!

Ever since entering the academy, she, Hu Yaoyao, had always been the one to get the better of others. When had she been bullied like that before?

If she were to give in, what pride would she have to remain in the academy?

Not to mention, what would the members of her Bewitching Devil Faction think of her as well?

But if she adamantly refused to submit... what if that lunatic were to really do it?

Frustrated, Hu Yaoyao clenched her teeth so tightly together that it felt as if they would chip soon. In that moment of dilemma, her gaze suddenly fell on Luo Qiqi, and a thought flashed through her mind.

Si la!

She extended her right hand to her left shoulder and tore off the cloth of her dress, revealing her smooth shoulder.

"If you wish to hang me on a flagpole, so be it! However... be prepared to face the consequences then. If I were to say that you tried to take advantage of me, I wonder what will happen to you. For a master teacher to engage in such despicable acts... will you even be able to retain your master teacher license?" Hu Yaoyao chuckled cunningly.

Challenge me?

Try again a century later!

"..." Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless by the other party's antics.

He finally understood why the other party was called the Bewitching Devil.

If it had been Luo Qiqi who'd met with such a situation, she

would have been overwhelmed with embarrassment and humiliation. Yet, Hu Yaoyao actually went to the extent of ripping her clothes apart!

If she were to run out in such a state and scream that Zhang Xuan had taken advantage of her, there would really be quite a few people who would believe her.

Ultimately, ladies were often viewed as the weaker gender, making it easier for them to win the sympathy of others, especially for those as beautiful as Hu Yaoyao.

Even though Zhang Xuan had nothing to fear as he hadn't done anything at all—the Master Teacher Pavilion wouldn't act without concrete evidence on hand, and it was illogical to think that a Transcendent Mortal 6-dan cultivator could actually take advantage of a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan cultivator—but considering the large fan-base that Hu Yaoyao had, he would definitely face a fair bit of trouble following such rumors.

That would truly be annoying for him.

All Zhang Xuan wanted to do was to spend his time in the Master Teacher Pavilion peacefully, reading his books and making some breakthroughs in his cultivation before leaving quietly. Why was this simple wish of his so difficult to achieve?

Seeing the young man before her fall speechless, Hu Yaoyao's eyes curled into crescents, and she chuckled softly. Enduring the severe pain her body was suffering from, she stood up and walked up to Zhang Xuan. Standing half a chi 1 away from him, she taunted, "What? Are you scared now?"

With their bodies nearly pressed against one another, Zhang Xuan could clearly smell the unique fragrance that she exuded. Troubled by her actions, however, Zhang Xuan frowned and subconsciously took a step backward.

Just as he was considering whether he should send another fist at

the other party to make her behave, an astonished voice abruptly sounded.

"Teacher... and Senior Yaoyao... What are you two doing?"

Unknowingly, Luo Qiqi had woken up amidst their confrontation, and looking at the two who were just slightly more than a chi away from one another, exclaimed in alarm.

Chapter 777: She Was the One Taking Advantage of Me!

The Blazing Moon Blade had only jolted Luo Qiqi's soul. While she had fainted from the impact, there was actually no significant damage done, and she would awaken once her soul calmed down.

The moment she opened her eyes, the first thing she saw was her teacher and Hu Yaoyao's bodies pressed closely together, as if lovers rendezvousing in the night.

This was especially so with the clothes of the latter ripped by the shoulder, revealing her silky skin. If one were to look from the side, one could even see hints of her voluptuous figure... Bewildered by the scene before her, she couldn't help but exclaim in shock.

"Wuuuu! Qiqi, you are finally awake..."

Hearing that voice, Hu Yaoyao anxiously covered her body as she backed away from Zhang Xuan with fear and anguish reflected in her eyes. Pointing at Zhang Xuan with a trembling finger, she cried, "It is out of kindness that I invited the both of you for dinner, but... your teacher actually tried to take advantage of me! With this, how can I possibly face others in the future?"

The more Hu Yaoyao spoke, the more miserable she looked. With her face still pale from the injury she had incurred previously, she seemed like a damsel in distress, bullied by a hoodlum but had no way to redress her grievance.

"Stop fooling around!" Unexpectedly, Luo Qiqi shook her head in response to Hu Yaoyao's words. "Teacher tried to take advantage of you? Senior, you must be mistaken somewhere!"

"..."

Hearing those words, Hu Yaoyao's body staggered weakly, and she nearly fainted on the spot.

Big sister, can't you take a look at the situation before you?

Look at the wretched state I am in, as well as the fear in my eyes. Surely any rational person could tell that I have been taken advantage of?

Fool around? Which eye of yours saw that I am fooling around? I have been taken advantage of, alright!

"Putting aside the fact that my teacher isn't your opponent, even if he was, there's no way he would be interested in you. So, you can rest assured that he would not lay a single hand on you!" Luo Qiqi replied earnestly.

Back then, after surviving the ordeal in the underground chamber in which Wu Yangzi had been imprisoned, she, Yu Fei-er, and Zhang Xuan had been together for more than half a month. Both she and Yu Fei-er possessed beauty on par with Hu Yaoyao, but Zhang Xuan didn't even spare them an additional glance throughout their journey. Given such, why would he take advantage of Hu Yaoyao whom he had only met twice?

Even if you wish to put on an act, at least show some professionalism in crafting your story!

Pu!

With Luo Qiqi's merciless words adding salt to her injury, the severe wound she had incurred before aggravated, and fresh blood spewed from her mouth once more.

What the heck is this!

Who am I?

A famed beauty of Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, an existence whom no man can remain unmoved before, Hu Yaoyao! Yet, when I said that I have been taken advantage of, not only did you toss aside my words as if they were nothing, you even said that... he was completely uninterested in me!

"What right does he have to be uninterested in me? Why won't he lay a hand on me?" Hu Yaoyao spat through gritted teeth.

The more she thought about the matter, the angrier she felt. At this moment, she could almost explode from sheer fury.

"Calm down. My teacher is an unparalleled talent, so his standards are extremely high. It's only natural that he's not interested in you!" Luo Qiqi consoled.

"..." Hu Yaoyao's body trembled in frenzy, unable to believe what she was hearing.

Are you sure you are consoling me?

Why does it feel like you are pricking my heart with a needle instead?

I am Hu Yaoyao!

To think that a day would come where I would actually be snubbed by a man...

The outcome of this matter had Hu Yaoyao nearly going insane from the sheer ridiculousness of the situation.

However, she didn't remain frenzied for too long. No matter what, she was still a Grade-5 student, the leader of one of the largest student factions in the academy. Despite her raging fury, she still managed to forcefully calm herself down. Harrumphing coldly, she said, "Fine! Even if he is uninterested in me, it's a fact that he bears lustful intentions toward you! If you don't believe me, look at your clothes!"

Luo Qiqi might have been able to remain confident of her teacher's morals when looking at the matter as a third party, but when she was involved in it as well, surely her confidence would waver!

"Me?" It was only then that Luo Qiqi realized that her clothes had been ripped apart by a surge of sword qi as well, baring her smooth

shoulder.

"Really?" Luo Qiqi's eyes lit up as she hurriedly turned her gaze to her teacher, only to meet with his clear and pure eyes. Thus, she could only shake her head with a bitter smile and say, "Teacher isn't interested in me either..."

"..." Hu Yaoyao's body trembled uncontrollably yet again.

What in the world was this!

She had made meticulous preparations to drag Zhang Xuan's reputation into the gutter, leaving him incapable of raising his head before others. But who could have known that... Luo Qiqi would actually be so trusting of him!

If he is uninterested in both you and me, who in the freaking world can catch his eye then?

Hu Yaoyao had always used her appearance and figure to deal with men, and never once had she failed before. Yet, on this day, she'd suffered a crushing setback.

Not only so, even at this point, she could still feel her organs churning within, leaving her face paler and paler.

When had she, Hu Yaoyao, suffered such a crushing blow before?

If others were to learn of this, how could she continue to keep her head high before them?

It was just the previous day that she'd declared confidently to Dong Xin, Xue Zhenyang, and the others that she would definitely subdue Zhang Xuan, and she had even invited them over to watch the show she had prepared...

But if there was still any show to be seen at this point, it would only be her humiliating herself!

As fury swiftly grew and clouded her mind, she furiously roared, "I will kill you..."

She could no longer care less about anything else at this moment.

Gathering immense might in her hand, she thrust her palm forward to strike Zhang Xuan.

Dong dong dong!

But before her palm could reach Zhang Xuan, a series of knocking suddenly sounded from the door. Following which, the calm voice of a lady called out, "Yaoyao, are you in there?"

"Teacher..." Hearing the voice, Hu Yaoyao immediately leaped in shock.

"Teacher? Could that person be... School Head Wei?" Luo Qiqi exclaimed in astonishment.

It was common knowledge in the academy that Hu Yaoyao's teacher was the head of the Terpsichore School. Since Hu Yaoyao was addressing the person at the door as her teacher, it could only mean the latter was School Head Wei.

"School Head Wei? Teacher?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback for an instant as well.

However, in the next moment, his eyes lit up. He hurriedly rushed up to Hu Yaoyao, grabbed her hands, and placed it on his chest.

"What are you doing?" Not expecting Zhang Xuan to suddenly rush forward to grab her hands, Hu Yaoyao was flabbergasted for a moment before hurriedly retracting her hands.

Si la!

But unbeknownst to her, her finger had been hooked onto Zhang Xuan's clothes. As a result, when she retracted her hands, she ended up tearing a portion of his clothes as well. In the next moment, the zhenqi of the young man before her abruptly flew into disarray, and his face reddened. With a spurt of fresh blood, he suddenly flew backward.

Peng!

His back crashed into the doors of the main hall, and even though he managed to land on his feet eventually, his ghastly pale face and trembling limbs seemed to indicate that he could collapse at any moment.

"What are you doing?" Seeing the other party grab her hands at one moment and spurting blood and flying backward in the next, Hu Yaoyao was completely bewildered. She couldn't understand what he was up to, but an ominous premonition grasped her heart, telling her that she was going to be in for a round of misfortune.

"Yaoyao?"

However, the situation left her no time to think the matter through.

After hearing the commotion in the room, School Head Wei immediately rushed forward to strike open the door with her palm.

Pah!

In the next moment, a lady who seemed to be in her thirties flitted into the room with a gust of wind.

"Teacher!"

"School Head Wei!" Upon seeing the figure who entered, Hu Yaoyao and Luo Qiqi immediately bowed deeply without any hesitation.

The lady was none other than the head of the Terpsichore School, one of the Ten Great Master Teachers!

"What happened?" School Head Wei asked with a frown.

She had barged in after hearing the fighting sounds in the room. After entering, she saw Hu Yaoyao standing unharmed at the center of the room. On the other hand, however, a severely injured young man was lying feebly against the wall not too far away.

"Zhang shi?" Taking a closer look at the severely injured young

man, School Head Wei couldn't help but exclaim in astonishment.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was also stunned by what he saw.

The lady was none other than the Saint realm expert whom he had met earlier this afternoon, Wei Ranxue!

When did she become the head of the Terpsichore School? Wasn't she just an elder?

But considering that the Ten Great Master Teachers were also known as the Ten Great Elders, it wasn't really a mistake to say that she was an elder of the academy either...

Seeing Zhang Shi, who was half a teacher to her, lying by the side of the room severely injured, Wei Ranxue immediately asked anxiously, "Zhang Shi, what's wrong?"

With a pale face, Zhang Xuan said weakly, "Thank goodness you came at a timely moment. Otherwise, Hu Yaoyao might have really violated me!"

Violate you? Upon hearing those words, Hu Yaoyao nearly fainted from anger.

Brother, that's my line!

You are the one who is going to be cursed at by others for years to come for attempting to take advantage of me...

How did I become the one who attempted to violate you?

If things had gone according to her plan, she would have made everyone think that he had malicious intentions at heart, and through exerting pressure on him via the student populace afterward, she would force him into submission!

But how did the tables end up turning on her?

At this moment, she finally understood why the other party had grabbed her hands previously. After all that had happened just now, Zhang Xuan's clothes were ripped, and his body was severely

wounded. No matter which angle one looked at him from, he seemed like a pitiful person who had been humiliated and was powerless to retaliate.

"Teacher..." On the other hand, Luo Qiqi clutched her forehead with her hand.

She knew that her teacher wasn't a person who would allow himself to be bullied, and as she had expected, the tides ended up turning on Hu Yaoyao instead.

Trying to frame my teacher? You'd better prepare to have the favor returned to you!

"Violate you?" Wei Ranxue was taken aback as well.

With grave indignation on his face, Zhang Xuan spoke through gritted teeth. "That's right. She invited me over, hoping to learn terpsichorean arts from me, but I rejected her. Who could have known that sword over there would assault Luo Qiqi and me? If not for the fact that I haven't recovered from my internal injuries yet, how could I possibly be humiliated like that?"

"Y-you! How dare you slander me!" Hu Yaoyao was on the verge of going insane.

Learning terpsichorean arts from you? I did invite you over, but how in the world was I to know that you are capable of terpsichorean arts as well!

Furthermore, internal injuries? What internal injuries do you have? I am the one who has internal injuries, not you!

Hu Yaoyao had thought that she was already scheming enough, but who could have known that she would actually be outwitted by an even more shameless fellow!

"I slandered you? Since you are still denying it, do you dare to swear that you didn't attempt to assault Luo Qiqi using that sword?" Zhang Xuan said aggrievedly as he stared at Hu Yaoyao in indignation.

"I..." Hu Yaoyao wanted to refute Zhang Xuan's claim, but she had no idea how she could explain the situation.

She did prepare something in the sword which ended up knocking Luo Qiqi out.

"Can't do it, right? Since that's the case, do you dare vow that you didn't declare that you were going to kill me and attempt an attack on me?" Zhang Xuan pressed on.

"That's because you... Shameless!" Agitated, Hu Yaoyao's breathing hastened, and her chest leaped up and down along with her breathing. At this point, she was on the verge of exploding from rage.

She did declare that she was going to kill Zhang Xuan, but that was just a figure of speech in a moment of anger after being provoked by him...

Interjecting the other party's words, Zhang Xuan declared in a feeble voice, "I am only a weak Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle cultivator whereas you are a Chrysalis Bridge realm pinnacle expert. With three whole cultivation realms between us, I am powerless before you. But even if I were to be killed, I won't allow myself to be humiliated!"

Hearing Zhang Xuan's words, Hu Yaoyao seemed to have suffered yet another heavy blow, and her body trembled uncontrollably.

You call that powerless? Doesn't that mean that if you were to possess power, I would die with even just at a glance from you?

You were the one who nearly killed me, and yet you still dare to say such words... How can your skin be so thick?

However, the urgent matter at hand was to placate her teacher first. Hu Yaoyao immediately turned to her teacher in order to explain the matter, only to see that the extreme lividness on the other party's face.

"Hu Yaoyao, how dare you!"

"Teacher..." Hu Yaoyao had never seen her teacher flying into such a rage before, and her face immediately paled in fright.

"Don't you even think that I am oblivious to the trouble you usually cause! I only choose to turn a blind eye to it all as long as it doesn't affect your studies. Yet, you took my kindness for granted and attempted to make a move on Zhang shi. Tell me, who gave you the guts to do something like that?" Wei Ranxue roared furiously.

Zhang shi was half a teacher to her; she was indebted to him for his guidance. It was one thing for Hu Yaoyao to trouble others, but to dare lay her hands on her benefactor... This was going over the top!

"I..." Hu Yaoyao's body froze.

"Kneel down!" Wei Ranxue ordered sternly with a tight frown on her forehead.

Chapter 778: Apprentice Hu Yaoyao

"Teacher..." Hu Yaoyao's eyes reddened in indignation as she bit on her scarlet lips. After a moment of hesitation, her knees fell to the ground.

She was filled with hatred for Zhang Xuan, but she dared not to defy her teacher's orders.

"Little Wei, it's fine... I believe that she only did it out of a moment of folly." At this point, Zhang Xuan suddenly spoke up.

"Little Wei?" Hu Yaoyao almost failed to resist the urge to claw at her hair.

Her teacher, Wei Ranxue, was one of the Ten Great Master Teachers, a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, as well as the head of the Terpsichore School. Yet, a twenty-year-old freshman actually dared to address her as Little Wei...

"This student of mine has always been mischievous. I usually leave her to do as she pleases as long as she doesn't go overboard, but I didn't expect her to go for you as well. If I don't punish her strictly today, she will never learn her lesson!" Wei Ranxue replied.

With her eye of discernment, she could tell that something was amiss with the situation. It was unlikely that things were as what Zhang Shi had put it out to be. However, considering Hu Yaoyao's character and her past deeds, she could roughly fathom the happenings.

Her student had always been mischievous, but too busy with her work as a school head, she never really had a chance to discipline her student over such matters. Thus, she decided to make full use of this opportunity to teach her student a harsh lesson so that she wouldn't cause even greater trouble in the future.

Putting everything aside, given the deep understanding of terpsichorean arts that Zhang Shi possessed, she had been thinking

about how she could convince the latter to conduct a lecture in the Terpsichore School for the students, but by the time she knew it, Hu Yaoyao had already provoked him.

Are you intentionally working against me? How do you expect me to convince him to conduct a lecture in our school after such a matter?

"Teacher..." Not expecting her teacher to trust Zhang Xuan's words over hers, Hu Yaoyao panicked.

"Enough! I am speaking to Zhang shi, there's no place for a junior like you to butt in. Reflect on your actions silently!" Wei Ranxue flung her sleeves and harrumphed.

"Junior..." Hu Yaoyao's body trembled.

Those words... Did that mean that the other party was her senior too? But wasn't he just a freshman in the academy?

"Zhang shi, allow me to apologize to you in the stead of my troublemaking disciple. Here is a Miniature Restorative Pill, it should be of some help in the recovery of your wounds!" Flicking her wrist, Wei Ranxue took out a jade bottle and passed it over.

"Miniature Restorative Pill? The grade-6 pill?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

Miniature Restorative Pill was a well-known grade-6 pill that was effective even on injured Saint realm experts. Just a single one of them was easily worth several high-tier spirit stones in the market!

To give it away so casually... The other party was so generous that he was already starting to feel a little embarrassed.

"How do you want me to deal with this troublemaking disciple of mine? Zhang shi, feel free to speak your mind, I'll surely do as you request!" Seeing Zhang Xuan take the pill, Wei Ranxue heaved a sigh of relief before continuing.

Since the other party had taken her Miniature Restorative Pill, it

was unlikely that he would ask for something extreme in exchange.

"How to deal with her?" Zhang Xuan fell into a moment of contemplation.

In truth, had Hu Yaoyao not tried to sow discord in the relationship between him and Luo Qiqi, he wouldn't have flown into a rage either.

It was due to her lack of respect for the sacred relationship between a teacher and a student that he was determined to teach her a stern lesson so as to let her know that there were some boundaries that one simply shouldn't exceed. Step beyond the boundary, and an action would be nothing but despicable.

"I am lacking an apprentice recently, so why don't you have her follow me for three months, and we will call this matter off?" After a moment of contemplation, Zhang Xuan proposed.

Hu Yaoyao had yet to reveal the location of Wu Yangzi's old residence, so it was best to keep her around for the time being so that he would have plenty of opportunities to try to get it out of her.

"Apprentice?" Hearing the request, Hu Yaoyao nearly fainted on the spot.

She, a 6-star terpsichore, was going to serve as an apprentice to this fellow?

What kind of joke is this?

There is no way my teacher will agree to this!

Otherwise, what will become of my teacher's dignity?

Just as Hu Yaoyao was certain that School Head Wei would reject the other party's request, she saw the latter's eyes lit up in agitation, "That will be for the best! Allow me to thank you in place of Yaoyao then!"

Zhang shi's comprehension of terpsichorean arts had reached an astounding level. If Hu Yaoyao could become his apprentice and learn from him, she would definitely progress leaps and bounds as a terpsichore!

Honestly speaking, even Wei Ranxue was feeling a little envious of the opportunity presented to Hu Yaoyao, so how could she possibly turn it down?

"Teacher!" Hearing those words, Hu Yaoyao exclaimed in a panic.

"Enough! It's only due to the good karma you have accrued over the past few lifetimes that you are given the opportunity to become Zhang shi's apprentice. From today on, you shall leave this residence and follow Zhang shi. Study well and return accomplished!" Interrupting the other party's words, Wei Ranxue said.

As the other party's teacher, she did have the right to make such a decision in the stead of her student.

"Apprentice..." Hu Yaoyao muttered sorrowfully through gritted teeth. At this point, she felt as if tears would spill from her eyes at any moment now.

Her teacher actually agreed to that fellow's request? Why?

She had invited that fellow over to teach him a lesson and take him in as her subordinate. Yet... in a bizarre twist of events, she became the other party's apprentice instead!

What the heck was this!

"Thank you, Little Wei!" Seeing the other party agreeing to it, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

"Zhang shi, here is your terpsichore emblem. Also, do take my personal token with you as well. There are many rules in the academy, so you might find yourself inconvenienced on many aspects. However, with this in hand, you should be spared lots of trouble!"

Wei Ranxue had made the application with the Terpsichore Guild headquarter right after she returned earlier in the afternoon, and it didn't take too long for her to receive the approval from them. After obtaining the 6-star emblem for Zhang Xuan, she immediately went to look for Hu Yaoyao to have her pass it on to the latter, but who knew that she would see such a sight as soon as she arrived?

"Thank you!" Zhang Xuan said as he took the emblem and token from Wei Ranxue's hands.

Honestly speaking, he hadn't expected the other party to be so efficient.

"I won't impose on you any longer then, farewell!" After chatting for a moment longer and deciding that Hu Yaoyao would report to his residence tomorrow, Zhang Xuan left the Cloud Sparrow Lodge with Luo Qiqi.

After the duo left, Hu Yaoyao turned to her teacher and asked anxiously, "Teacher... why?"

She couldn't understand why her teacher, one of the Ten Great Master Teachers, would actually make her serve as an apprentice to that fellow.

"Zhang Xuan's understanding of terpsichorean arts has reached an extremely profound level such that he could even be my teacher! The Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe which you have danced for your 6-star terpsichorean examination previously, he has identified seventeen flaws in them and corrected them impeccably! Here is the manual which I have edited based on his guidance. Just take a look at it, and you will know how incredible a figure he is!" Flicking her wrist, Wei Ranxue whipped out a book.

After hearing Zhang Shi's explanation regarding the flaws and the solutions to them, she immediately returned back to her residence to compile them into a book, and in the midst of doing so, she had gained a deeper insight of terpsichorean arts as well.

At the same time, she couldn't help but be awed time and time again by the ingenious modifications the other party made to the Dance of the Fleeting Cloud Robe. If Hu Yaoyao had danced the version modified by Zhang Xuan in her 6-star terpsichorean examination, perhaps what she would have attracted wouldn't just be a few Cloud Sparrows but a mighty dragon of the heavens.

Realizing this, she immediately rushed to the Cloud Sparrow Lodge to instruct Hu Yaoyao deliver Zhang Xuan's emblem in her stead. The purpose of this was to allow the duo to interact with one another and foster a close relationship, as well as to teach her student to remain humble as there was always a mountain taller than the other.

But who could have known that she would end up seeing the both of them crossing blows instead as soon as she arrived at the Cloud Sparrow Lodge? Since it was impossible to reverse what that had happened, she decided to just go along with Zhang Xuan's wish and send Hu Yaoyao over to serve as his apprentice.

While Hu Yaoyao might suffer a little under the other party, as long as she were to work hard and learn well from him, she could possibly surpass her very soon and become a 7-star terpsichore, or perhaps even go beyond that.

"He corrected the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe? There is a flaw in it?" Hu Yaoyao replied subconsciously in disbelief.

This dance had been passed down for innumerable years, and despite having cultivated it for a very long time, she had never found anything amiss with it. Yet, her teacher said that that fellow had identified seventeen flaws in it?

Perplexed, Hu Yaoyao flipped open the book and began browsing through it. Just a split moment later, she was already drawn in by the content of the book.

Her leisurely gaze slowly turned grim, and her face turned a shade paler with each page she flipped.

As a talented 6-star terpsichore, even though her understanding of terpsichorean art still wasn't able to match School Head Wei Ranxue's, it was still something she could take pride in.

In the book, her teacher had marked the flaws out clearly along with their implications, and the modification to resolve the respective issues were written beneath them. As a veteran practitioner of the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe, she could swiftly tell that there wasn't any mistake with the analysis.

"Teacher... Are these modifications really made by him?" After a long moment of silence, Hu Yaoyao gulped down a mouthful of saliva before slowly turning her gaze to her teacher.

"Un." Wei Ranxue nodded affirmatively.

If she hadn't witnessed it personally, she would have also found this hard to believe.

It was only due to the exchange she had with Zhang Xuan that had her convinced of the latter's deep understanding of terpsichorean arts.

"This..." Hearing the confirmation by her teacher, Hu Yaoyao suddenly recalled how her soul was assaulted by Zhang Xuan previously, leaving her in a state of dizziness.

Back then, the other party didn't even dance at all... In other words, he had turned a casual gesture into a terpsichorean art!

Even her teacher was incapable of such a feat!

"Alright, study hard and serve Zhang shi well. This is a precious opportunity, don't waste it!" Knowing that it would take some time for her student to accept this, Wei Ranxue left her with a piece of advice before leaving the residence to give her some space to think things through.

Hu Yaoyao was a rare genius with an astounding talent for terpsichorean arts, but it was exactly due to that which gave rise to her excessive pride. Perhaps this setback might help her to mature

both as a terpsichore and a master teacher!

After her teacher left, Hu Yaoyao turned her gaze to the modified manual once more, and a short moment later, she started to dance.

She wanted to try for herself to see if the modified manual was feasible in practice or not.

As her beautiful figure moved gracefully around the room, it was as if flowers had instantaneously bloomed in the area. A bewitching scent gradually drifted from the main hall.

As the koi fishes in the courtyard caught the scent, they fell into a trance and, 'putong! putong!', they sunk to the bottom of the pond. The flowers in the residence, captivated by the scent, began swaying along in harmony, and their petals fluttered in a calm breeze.

If there had been a human in the residence, he would have been fallen into a stupor as well. Not even a Half-Saint expert would have been able to remain unfazed before it.

A moment later, the dance finally stopped.

As Hu Yaoyao's body came to a halt, everything settled down and returned back to normal. However, she continued standing in a daze, as if she had been overwhelmed by her own dance as well. At this moment, a single thought dominated her mind—this was what a true terpsichorean art should be!

Everything she had learned before couldn't even come close to this!

Hu!

Unknowingly, tears began streaming down her cheeks in her moment of agitation.

"I am... crying?" Hu Yaoyao muttered blankly as she placed her hands on her cheeks and felt the moisture on it.

Even though she was able to draw out significant prowess from

her Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe in the past as well, she had been missing the very quintessence of the terpsichorean art, leaving her far from truly mastering it.

However, at this very moment, she felt as if the terpsichorean art had fused with her soul, becoming a part of her.

What she had done before could only be considered as an emulation of the terpsichorean art's form, missing out on its intentions entirely.

It was only in this instant that she was finally able to grasp the true essence of the dance!

"Just... how deep of an understanding does he have of terpsichorean arts to refine the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe to this extent?" Exhaling deeply, Hu Yaoyao couldn't help but mutter beneath her breath.

"Faction leader, Dong Xin, Xue Zhenyang, and Long Cangyue seeks an audience!"

Just as Hu Yaoyao was immersed in her thoughts, Xinru suddenly walked into the room and reported.

"Bring them in!" Hu Yaoyao said.

She thought that she would definitely be able to take down Zhang Xuan tonight, so she had gone ahead to invite the others over to show off her work.

Who could have thought that someone was indeed taken down... but the person ended up being her instead.

"How did it go? Where is Zhang Xuan? How did you deal with him?" As soon as the group walked into the main hall, Xue Zhenyang immediately asked.

"Indeed, tell us how you taught him a lesson! Did you force him to listen to you through brute force, or did you convince him by bewitching him?" Long Cangyue added.

In their perspective, since Hu Yaoyao had declared that she would be able to do it, she would surely succeed. After all, her ability in this field was truly no joke.

To be honest, even they would be a little apprehensive at the notion of going up against her, especially after hearing about the vicious methods she had used to deal with her opponents.

"How I taught him a lesson?"

Hu Yaoyao turned around and bowed slightly towards the group, "Zhang Xuan's private apprentice, Hu Yaoyao, greets you all!"

Chapter 779: Establishing a Faction

"A-a-apprentice?"

"Zhang Xuan's apprentice?"

For a short moment, Xue Zhenyang and the others were stupefied by what they had heard.

What is going on?

Didn't you say that you would teach Zhang Xuan a lesson? How did you end up becoming his apprentice instead?

There were two types of apprentices. One type was those who were new to the occupation, having yet to receive even their 1-star emblem. They would follow an official member of the occupation and learn under them.

The other would be a lower ranked member of the occupation serving as a private apprentice to a higher ranked member.

To distinguish between the two types of apprenticeships, the latter was often known as a private apprentice.

While the goal for a private apprentice was to learn from their master, the truth was that their standing was beneath that of even a student, and they were expected to deal with all sorts of miscellaneous issues for their master.

As the top students of the academy, each of the four of them had private apprentices under them. For example, Xinru was Hu Yaoyao's private apprentice.

But weren't you going to make Zhang shi submit to you?

Why did you become his private apprentice instead?

"I failed. I wasn't Zhang shi's match... You all can leave now." After reintroducing herself, Hu Yaoyao waved her hand to gesture for the rest of them to leave, unwilling to speak any more.

"This..."

They had come to celebrate the victory, but after hearing those words, Dong Xin, Xue Zhenyang, and Long Cangyue could only leave with bewildered looks.

"What is going on?"

After leaving the residence, the trio stared at one another in confusion.

"From the looks of it... it seems her plan has failed, and she even ended up being taught a lesson by Zhang Xuan instead!" Dong Xin said.

Based on her understanding of Hu Yaoyao, this was the only possibility she could think of.

"That seems to be the case..." Xue Zhenyang scratched his head. "But that's Hu Yaoyao! I have exchanged blows with her several times, and I have suffered quite a bit due to her unconventional means. To think that she would actually suffer such a crushing defeat to a freshman..."

"There seems to be something uncanny about that freshman... but the more uncanny he is, the more interested I become in him!" Long Cangyue said as a sharp glint flashed through his eyes.

They were all the top geniuses of the Master Teacher Academy, so when had they feared a challenge from another before?

For a freshman to foil their businesses so brazenly as soon as he arrived, they had to retaliate in order to uphold their authority.

"Honestly, I am also rather interested in him as a person as well." Dong Xin chuckled.

At this point, she remembered something and turned to Xue Zhenyang. "Didn't you dispatch some men to deal with those freshmen who assisted him?"

"I thought that Hu Yaoyao would be able to succeed, so I

dispatched my men to put those troublemaking freshmen in order before coming here... Judging by the time, it should already be done by now!" Xue Zhenyang replied.

Dong Xin pondered for a moment before shaking her head. "Given the strength of your subordinates, they shouldn't face any problems dealing with those freshmen. However... those freshmen have Zhang Xuan backing them, and we have yet to take the latter down. You were too rash; you should have waited for news of Hu Yaoyao's success first. As the saying goes, a cornered dog bites. If we push him too far, we might end up getting burnt ourselves too."

"So what? From the moment he foiled our business, we were already destined to be enemies. Even if you are willing to be compassionate to your enemy, do you think that your enemy will do the same for you? You must be joking! Besides, my men challenged them in a manner which is in accordance to the school rules. Even if Zhang Xuan wishes to get even with me over that, what can he do? As long as my men didn't breach the rules, not even School Head Mo or School Head Zhao will be able to say a thing about the matter!" Xue Zhenyang spoke confidently with a light chuckle.

"Unless... he is able to surpass my subordinates in terms of battle techniques, he will just have to accept it as it is!"

"Your men challenged him in the field of battle techniques?" Long Cangyue burst into laughter. "Indeed, you are the big senior of the Martial Arts School, the pride of the school head. Your understanding of the spear has already reached an unfathomable level. Having received your impartations, your subordinates' comprehension of martial arts should also be top-notch. Battle techniques require years of training in order to refine one's form and intention to perfection and achieve a harmony between them. No matter how talented Zhang Shi is, he's still far too inexperienced. It is unlikely for him to have achieved great accomplishment in the field of martial arts as well."

Unlike most supporting occupations where it was possible for one to make swift progress, one could only take a step at a time for battle techniques. Only through persistent effort over a long period of time could one accomplish anything.

Xue Zhenyang had a fiery and reckless personality, but his understanding of battle techniques, especially in the field of spearmanship, was unmatched amongst the students of the Master Teacher Academy.

Rumor had it that he had already comprehended the Heart of Weapons, achieving perfect harmony with his spear.

"Indeed. Even though we are master teachers, we are cultivators as well. If we don't show them what we seniors are capable of, they might just think that we have spent our years in the Master Teacher Academy achieving nothing!" With his back as straight as a spear, Xue Zhenyang spoke with absolute confidence.

He was no match for Hu Yaoyao in terms of scheming—in fact, he had been outwitted each and every time—but in terms of fighting prowess, the latter wasn't a match for him.

His spear possessed might reminiscent of a mighty dragon. Even amongst all of the Grade-5 students in the academy, there was only a handful who could match him in a battle.

"You're right. Supporting occupations are important, but the most important aspect of a cultivator is ultimately still strength. Let's head over and see your subordinates teach those freshmen a lesson!" Long Cangyue chuckled softly.

"Alright!" Xue Zhenyang nodded.

With this, the trio began walking toward the freshmen living quarters.

...

Shortly after leaving Hu Yaoyao's old residence with Luo Qiqi, as Zhang Xuan reached his residence in the Elite Sector, he saw

Ruohuan gongzi standing anxiously outside his door.

"Zhang shi, Senior Qiqi!" Upon seeing the both of them, Ruohuan gongzi's eyes immediately lit up, and he rushed up to them.

"I was just about to find you!" Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly.

"Find me?" Ruohuan gongzi was taken aback.

"You were the one who distributed the Teacher Information Document to the other freshmen for free, right?" Zhang Xuan questioned coldly.

That fellow had distributed the book that he had compiled for them to the other freshmen without his knowledge, and he had even used his name in doing so. Due to that incident, he had become an eyesore for all of the student factions.

He had done nothing at all, but this grudge just suddenly fell on him, bringing him so much trouble... He hadn't even confronted Ruohuan gongzi to settle this score with him, but the latter had already come knocking on his door.

He sure was brazen!

"That was the least I could do; Zhang shi need not thank me for it!" Upon hearing those words, Ruohuan gongzi waved his hands magnanimously, as if saying that he only did what he had to.

The least that you could do?

No need to thank me for it?

Zhang Xuan nearly choked on his saliva.

The other party had screwed him over so badly, but why did he act as if he had done an anonymous good deed instead?

As frustrated as Zhang Xuan was feeling at this very instant, seeing the grim expression on Ruohuan gongzi's face, it seemed that the latter had something urgent that required his help. Thus, he decided to put the matter aside for the moment and asked, "Did something happen?"

"Due to the matter with the Teacher Information Documentation, there were quite a few seniors who have come to challenged us over the past few days. Today, three experts arrived at the freshmen living quarters, and the words they spoke were truly infuriating. Out of fury, we accepted their challenge to a duel, but in the end... we were defeated tragically, and quite a few of us were severely injured," Ruohuan gongzi said.

Most of the freshmen were at Transcendent Mortal 4-dan pinnacle, and only a small handful had reached Transcendent Mortal 5-dan and 6-dan. On the other hand, even the weakest of the seniors were at the Cosmos Bridge realm. How could they possibly be a match for them?

Seemingly noticing the doubts running through Zhang Xuan's mind, Ruohuan gongzi replied, "They suppressed their cultivation realm to our level and challenged us to a battle of pure martial arts..."

"Martial arts?" Zhang Xuan was stunned for an instant before nodding in realization.

If the seniors had suppressed their cultivation realm to be of the same level as the freshmen, the battle would be decided mainly by the expertise and skillful utilization of their martial arts. In that case, it would at least be a fairer match between the two.

"Indeed. They have been standing outside the living quarters, saying that they will only back down if someone is able to defeat them. Otherwise, they will make sure to beat us until we dare not take a single step out of our rooms!"

After saying those words, Ruohuan gongzi lifted his gaze, and with a conflicted expression, he continued, "On top of that... they said that if no one is able to defeat them by today, they want Zhang shi to make a public apology to them, and all of the freshmen will have to purchase a copy of the Teacher Information Documentation!"

"Public apology? Me? What does this matter have to do with me?" Zhang Xuan was speechless.

So what if the seniors challenged the freshmen? What did this have to do with him?

For him to make a public apology... just how in the world did he cross them this time?

"This..." Ruohuan gongzi scratched his head in embarrassment as he said, "You also know that joining the factions established by the seniors will require quite a substantial membership fee each year. However, as freshmen, how could we possibly have the money to pay for the membership fee? Thus... all of us decided to join the student faction you established..."

"The student faction I established? When did I establish a student faction?" The more Zhang Xuan listened to the other party's words, the more bewildered he became.

Was it really still him they were talking about? Just when in the world did he establish a student faction?

"Well... I thought that Zhang shi's act of giving away your points in the entrance examination for free to the other students was an attempt to rally them together under you, so I assumed that you were going to establish a faction yourself. On top of that, the only person who all of us freshmen are awed by is you, and all of us are willing to listen to your commands as well. Thus, after some discussion, we decided to start a student faction with you as the leader," Ruohuan gongzi said.

"I am the leader?" Zhang Xuan felt as if the world had gone mad.

Unknowingly, he actually became the leader of a faction... It was as if they were pushing him into a sea of flames!

"Indeed. Zhang shi, we hope that you won't turn this position down. Without an affiliation to any student faction, it is too difficult for a freshman to thrive in the academy. In fact, one

might even be hindered at every step taken. Of the thirty thousand freshmen, you are the only one who commands the respect and admiration of everyone. If you don't step up to the position as the leader, who else can?" Ruohuan gongzi said anxiously.

"Besides, the seniors have been doing whatever pleases them, oppressing the freshmen as and when they like just because they have been in the academy for a longer period of time than we have. If we don't unite together to fight back against them, we will never be able to stop their tyranny."

"This..." Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan hesitated.

He was displeased at being pushed to the forefront of the conflict despite having done nothing at all, but Ruohuan gongzi's words did carry some truth in them.

Without being affiliated with any student faction, it would be hard for a freshman to survive in the academy.

Due to the matter with the free Teacher Information Documentation, there were already a fair number of seniors who carried hostility toward the current batch of freshmen. If they didn't unite together to fight back, their life could be made extremely difficult.

"Didn't you guess that such a situation would happen when you gave the Teacher Information Documentation out for free?" Zhang Xuan glanced at Ruohuan gongzi coldly.

As knowledgeable master teachers, how could Song Chao, Luo Xuan, and the others be unaware that their actions would offend the seniors?

"Back then, we only did that out of indignation. The seniors had intentionally raised the price of the Teacher Information Documentation, knowing that we would have no choice but to purchase it. On top of that, they conducted forceful deals, pummeling the students who refused to purchase it to serve as a

warning to the others against rejecting them...

"Furthermore, even if we were to buy from one of the student factions, we might end up offending another student faction instead, thus resulting in us getting bullied regardless of the choices we make...

"Therefore, after some discussion with the others, we agreed that instead of living pathetically under their oppression, we might as well stand up and return the favor. As a result, we decided to distribute the book which you'd given us to the other freshmen."

Ruohuan gongzi's face reddened as he added, "For this matter, I ask of Zhang shi's forgiveness. We only did it because we were forced into a corner as well!"

"Jeez..." Zhang Xuan sighed.

Having attended the public lecture event, he had a rough idea of the situation there as well.

He had stopped by a member of the True Helios Faction, and the latter took a particularly arrogant attitude with them, threatening that 'If you don't buy my Teacher Information Documentation, you will be making an enemy out of the entire True Helios Faction'.

Considering that the freshmen who had just enrolled into the academy were the weakest amongst the student populace and that they had no connections to tap into either, they couldn't afford to offend any of the student factions.

Zhang Xuan was fortunate in the sense that he had won Elder Mo's favor during the entrance examination. As a result, most seniors wouldn't dare to provoke Zhang Xuan in fear of bringing Elder Mo's ire upon themselves.

Realizing this, Zhang Xuan sighed in resignation and asked, "Fine. Since you have initiated a student faction in my stead, what is it called? I should at least know this much, right?"

Seeing that Zhang Xuan had accepted the matter, Ruohuan gongzi heaved a sigh of relief and replied, "The student factions are often named after their leader. For example, the True Helios Faction's name is derived from Xue Zhenyang 1 , and the Ashen Moon Faction's name is derived from Long Cangyue 2 ... Thus, we also took your name into consideration in naming our faction so as to make it apparent who our leader is!"

"My name? So, our faction is called the Zhang Xuan Faction?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"No, it's called..."

At this point, a look of excitement appeared on Ruohuan gongzi's face as he said, "Xuanxuan Faction!"

Chapter 780: Why Don't You Stay as Our Gatekeeper?

"Xuanxuan Faction..." Upon hearing the name, Zhang Xuan nearly spurted a mouthful of blood.

I understand that the names of most student factions have two syllables, so you wanted to do the same as well. I know that unlike Xue Zhenyang and Long Cangyue, my name only has one syllable, but surely you can just add my surname in as well! Xuanxuan Faction... Xuan your head!

Look at the names of the other student factions! True Helios Faction, Ashen Moon Faction... Each of them sounds majestic and impressive, but as for mine... Don't you think it sounds a little too cute for the name of a faction?

"Yes. Our initial intention was to go with Xuan Faction, but there were quite a few people who opposed to it, saying that it is an inauspicious name, as if casting doubt on the future of our faction. They proposed for it to be named Xuanxuan Faction instead. This way, it gives an unfathomable and profound feeling to those hearing its name!" Ruohuan gongzi explained 1 .

"..." Zhang Xuan's body swayed weakly.

To think that even his name would be scorned...

"Those seniors have come to challenge our faction, and as you are the leader of our faction... it's only natural that they've demand an apology from you. However, none of us are a match for them, so I can only ask for Zhang shi's help with this issue..." After explaining the matter, Ruohuan gongzi revealed the purpose behind his visit.

His initial thought was to first build up Xuanxuan Faction and only bring Zhang Xuan in once everything was in place. But who could have known that the other party would go to the extent of blockading their entrance? Left with no choice, he could only head

here to ask Zhang Xuan for help.

"Alright, since it's my student faction, it won't do for me to just watch by the side while someone is hindering and beating up my members. Let's head over to take a look," Zhang Xuan said as he rubbed his glabella in frustration.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan felt like he was Zhao Kuangyin 2 , being forced to don the yellow robe 3 after the coup at Chen Bridge.

Even when idle, disaster would still somehow find its way to him as if he was a magnet attracting trouble. Without any prior warning, he suddenly found himself as the leader of a faction.

Just what in the world was this?!

It would be too late even if he were to turn down the position now. The seniors and the other student factions had already decided that he was the ringleader behind the mess, and they would do everything they could to bring him down. Rather than standing against them alone, he might stand up as the leader of the Xuanxuan Faction and organize its members to stand against the seniors together.

Honestly, his only goal here was to read books and live his life in peace, but somehow... he found himself becoming the nemesis of the seniors and the messiah of the freshmen...

Just the thought of it left him feeling a little stifled.

Unlike Zhang Xuan, who had been given the highest of privileges right after his enrollment in the academy, freshmen usually lived in shared dormitories in a corner of the academy.

With Ruohuan gongzi leading the way, it didn't take long for the trio to arrive at the dormitories.

The area was filled with many high-rise buildings, and a vast square stood at the very center of the buildings.

There were several dueling platforms on the square with chairs and tables scattered around them. Looking at the sides of the square, there were quite a few cleaning tools lying in the corner. It seemed this was the area where duels were often conducted, and it was frequently cleaned to maintain the area.

At this moment, the square was packed with countless freshmen.

Even though it was already in the middle of the night, there were several torches lit around the square, and quite a number of Night Illumination Pearls were floating above as well, bringing light to the area.

On the dueling platform at the very center of the square, three men stood proudly as they gazed down at the crowd beneath them with an air of superiority.

"Those three are the seniors who came to challenge us," Ruohuan gongzi said.

Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to the trio.

Instead of the usual master teacher robe that students wear, they were dressed in tight training clothes.

The first one seemed to be in his late twenties, and he was slightly taller in stature than the other two. There was a well-groomed beard on his face, and what was particularly striking about him was the aggressive glint in his black eyes.

Held in his hand was a majestic Nine-ringed Saber which was nearly half of his height in length. Bulky and heavy, it was a weapon that demanded immense strength from its wielder.

The second one had long arms and legs, but his figure was slightly slimmer than the others'. He held no weapon in his hands, but his figure was reminiscent of an agile ape.

The third wielded a long spear that extended over two meters long. His very presence felt sharp like a sword, as if he would slice apart even the air itself.

"Not bad!" Zhang Xuan offered a rare compliment to the trio.

As expected of veteran martial artists, he could already feel the aura they were exuding even from a distance away. It was no wonder they dared to challenge all of the freshmen; they did possess the strength to act so arrogantly.

Recognizing the trio, Luo Qiqi sent him a telepathic message. "They are from the True Helios Faction!"

"True Helios Faction?"

"Yes. I recognize the three of them, they are Grade-4 students. Their cultivation levels have already reached Transcendent Mortal 8-dan Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle.

"The one who is wielding the Nine-ringed Saber is called Bai Shuang 4 . Due to the stark contrast with his dark complexion, he was mockingly addressed as White Face in the beginning. However, as he comprehended the Saber Heart and began making his name as a skilled saber user, others began calling him the White-faced Frenzied Saber. As time went by, this name stuck with him, so he decisively chose to change his name to Bai Mian 5 . Even within the Martial Arts School, he can be considered as a famed genius!" Luo Qiqi explained.

"The second is known as Yuan Gang. Due to his long arms and his exceptional proficiency in close-quarters combat, he was given the nickname Supreme Ape. After hearing that name, instead of flying into a rage, he even took delight in it, thinking that it was particularly suited to him. As a result, others also began addressing him as such.

"As for the last one, he is called Ying Qin, and he is the strongest of the group. He learned his spearmanship straight from Xue Zhenyang, and he once severed a river several dozen meters wide. This feat bore testimony to his immense strength and aptitude with the spear, so came his reputation as the 'River Severing Steel Spear'!

"The three of them are experts of the Martial Arts School, possessing exceptional talent for battle techniques. Considering that they are the ones challenging the freshmen... it will indeed be difficult for the freshmen to defeat them!" Luo Qiqi shook her head.

Of the entire Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, the students of the Martial Arts School possessed the greatest fighting prowess. Skilled in battle techniques, they were capable of utilizing profound maneuvers in battle to turn the tables on their opponents.

Even among the powerful students of the Martial Arts School, these three men stood amidst the top. For a bunch of freshmen who had never undergone the advanced training of the academy, it was nigh impossible for them to defeat such opponents.

Even with their cultivation suppressed, their sharp insight into the flow of battle and reaction speed weren't things that Clarifying Turbidity realm or Consonant Spirit realm cultivators could match.

"They are from the Martial Arts School? I see!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Back then, when he was traveling to Hongyuan City, Luo Qiqi had touched on the Martial Arts School while introducing the basic system of the Master Teacher Academy to him.

Unlike the other schools, the Martial Arts School wasn't affiliated with any supporting occupation. It was constructed for the sole purpose of raising the fighting prowess of the master teachers.

Most of the students of this school had achieved a profound understanding in the study of martial arts, making them unmatched in a duel against their peers.

Taking the trio on the dueling platform for example, even amongst Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle experts, they could be

considered as the cream of the crop. Considering the skills that they possessed, it was no wonder they dared to provoke all of the freshmen at once. They indeed had nothing to fear.

"Is there anyone else?"

While they were speaking, another freshman was defeated by Supreme Ape Yuan Gang. The latter sneered coldly as his gaze swept across the crowd. "Is this all this batch's freshmen has? I thought that you were still alright, but it seems like I overestimated all of you. With capability like yours, you all still dared to create a faction? How laughable!"

"You... I'll fight you!" Hearing the other party mocking them, a freshman couldn't suppress his rage and stepped forward.

This freshman was at Consonant Spirit realm intermediate stage, so Yuan Gang suppressed his cultivation to equal his. As soon as the battle started, Yuan Gang's figure immediately disappeared. Before the freshman could even process what was happening, he was already struck in his chest, and the impact sent him flying from the dueling platform.

"They aren't a match for them at all..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

The freshmen consisted of the top geniuses from the various areas, but there was simply too huge a gap between them and the top students of the Martial Arts School. It was no wonder Ruohuan gongzi had rushed to his residence to bring him over. It was indeed impossible for the freshmen to defeat them on their own.

They were simply on two completely different levels.

With several millenniums of history behind it, the Martial Art Schools possessed the most valuable of insights from countless preceding master teachers. On top of that, there were formidable master teachers who were experts in combat themselves guiding the students personally. Perhaps if the freshmen were given a few

more years to refine their skills in the academy, they might still be a match for the trio. But at this very moment... it was impossible for them to stand against the trio.

"Let's head over!" Knowing that none of the freshmen would be a match for the trio, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply before making his way forward.

"Zhang shi is here!"

"Our faction leader has come!"

"This is great, we are saved..."

"Faction leader, these old students are too much. You must teach them a lesson in our stead!"

"Indeed! We can't simply let them step over us like that..."

Before Zhang Xuan could reach the dueling platform, there were already several freshmen who had recognized him, and they shouted in agitation. Following which, the other freshmen in the surroundings immediately turned their gazes over, their eyes glowing with relief and hope.

This young man before their eyes had done a lot for them. He had given out his points in the entrance examination, allowing more than twenty thousand students to successfully enroll into the academy as well. After which, he had given out the Teacher Information Documentation for free, sparing them from the extortion ploy of the seniors.

Furthermore, at this very moment, he was the head of Xuanxuan Faction, their leader. His arrival was like an injection of confidence to them, as if they had finally found their pillar of support.

The crowd swiftly opened up a pathway for them, allowing Zhang Xuan, Luo Qiqi, and Ruohuan gongzi to walk right up to the dueling platform.

Beneath the dueling platform lay several dozen injured students.

Even though their injuries weren't too severe, they were left in quite an unsightly manner.

"Zhang shi..."

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, Song Chao, Luo Xuan, and the others rushed up to him agitatedly.

Ever since they had known Zhang Xuan, there had not been a single occasion they could recall in which the latter had been incapable of something. The trio on the dueling platform might be impressive, but they had absolute confidence in Zhang Xuan. In their view, it was already a certain victory for them from the moment Zhang Xuan arrived on the scene.

While a wave of excitement washed across the crowd beneath, the trio on the dueling platform also glanced down to look at Zhang Xuan.

"So, he is the legendary Zhang Xuan? He looks so-so!" the dark-faced Bai Mian sneered.

"Regardless of whether he is so-so or not, we must make him learn the price of offending our True Helios Faction!" Supreme Ape Yuan Gang harrumphed.

"Be careful when you strike later on. Our faction leader has already warned us about his incredible background. It'll suffice for him to learn of our prowess; there's no need to go too far. It won't be in our favor if this matter reaches the elders," Ying Qin instructed.

"Don't worry. We know what to do. He's just a freshman; I'll leave him on his knees, begging for mercy, within three blows!" Bai Mian declared confidently with a sneer.

With a flick of his wrist, his immense saber flew in an arc, creating a deep resounding whir in the air. Stabbing his saber into the platform, he glanced at Zhang Xuan coldly and asked, "You are Zhang Xuan?"

His voice was overflowing with aggression toward Zhang Xuan.

Looking at the hostility the other party was exuding, as if he had wronged the other party grievously somehow, Zhang Xuan could only nod helplessly. "Others do address me as such."

"Good. Do you dare duel against me?" With a provocative smile on his lips, Bai Mian issued his challenge. "Don't worry, I'll suppress my cultivation to your level. I won't take advantage of you."

"A duel?"

Seeing the other party challenging him to a duel right away, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply before replying, "That's fine by me, but if I am not mistaken, you seem to have said that you want me to apologize to the True Helios Faction and have all of the freshmen purchase the Teacher Information Documentation if the freshmen lose this confrontation. Is there such a matter?"

"That's indeed the case!" Bai Mian nodded smugly.

"Since you have imposed a bet on the duel, what do you have to offer if you lose then?" Zhang Xuan questioned.

"Us?" Bai Mian was slightly thrown off his momentum by the question. However, he recovered swiftly and answered, "There's no way we will lose!"

A higher-grade student challenging a lower-grade student—while it was a challenge in name, it couldn't be clearer to everyone that this was just a means to teach the other party a lesson and impose hierarchical order upon them! Given such, how could they possibly lose?

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "There's no way you will lose? Don't be so certain about it. There's no such thing as a sure victory in a duel.

"If you aren't willing to put anything on the line, why should I waste my time fighting with you?"

You wish to bet with me without putting anything at stake? You must be joking with me!

If there's nothing to earn, why should I tire myself out?

"This..." Not expecting the other party to raise the issue about the stakes as soon as he arrived, Bai Mian turned to the other two to seek their opinions.

Ying Qin had a frown on his face as well. After a moment of contemplation, he stepped forward and said, "Zhang shi is right. Since we have imposed conditions on you, it's only right for us to put something on the line as well. How about this? If we lose, I'll take back everything I have said and apologize to all of you."

"Apologize?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "How about this instead? It hasn't been long since our Xuanxuan Faction was established, and it just so happens that we are lacking some servants to guard our doors. If you lose, you shall back out of the True Helios Faction to watch our doors. What do you think of that?"

Chapter 781: Imparting a Saber Art Maneuver

"Watch your gates?" Ying Qin, Bai Mian, and Yuan Gang clenched their fists tightly after hearing those words, nearly exploding on the spot.

They were Grade-4 students, Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle experts. Yet, a freshman actually wanted them to watch their gates?

Was this even a bet anymore?

This was clearly an attempt to humiliate them!

"Weren't you confident that you wouldn't lose just a moment ago? If you won't lose, surely the content of the bet won't matter to you, right? What, has your confidence wavered?" Zhang Xuan gazed at the trio with a slight smile on his lips.

"Change the conditions!" With a livid expression, Ying Qin flung his sleeves and harrumphed.

Even though they wouldn't lose, they couldn't bring themselves to accept such a bet. The other party was clearly belittling them!

"It seems you aren't as confident as you seem. Well, there's no need to be embarrassed about losing. Everyone loses sometimes; there's no shame in it," Zhang Xuan consoled.

"You!"

Hearing those words, Ying Qin, Bai Mian, and Yuan Gang nearly spewed blood.

What do you mean by embarrassed? What do you mean by saying everyone loses sometime and there's no shame in it?

We aren't afraid of losing; we just find your conditions humiliating!

Just as they were about to refute the other party's words, the other party suddenly lowered his head, seemingly falling into contemplation. "If you are really that afraid of losing, why don't I offer some guidance to some of the freshmen and send them up to fight against you? If that's still too much for you to accept... how about those you have just defeated? Surely you should be a little more confident with that? I don't think I can go any lower than this..."

"You..."

Seeing how the other party was going further and further, Ying Qin's fury peaked. "Fine! We will accept your conditions! You'd better pray that you are as capable as your mouth, or else just wait and see!"

Upon receiving the other party's agreement, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction before issuing a set of instructions. "Good! Ruohuan and Song Chao, send a few men to construct a gate at the entrance. Otherwise, there will be nothing for them to watch later on."

The living quarters of the freshmen were enclosed, and there was an entrance for students to enter and leave the premises. However, there was no gate at the entrance. It would be awkward if those fellows had nothing to watch over when they lost.

"Alright!" Ruohuan gongzi and Song Chao nodded before leaving to settle the matter.

"You are courting death!"

Seeing how the other party was acting as if victory was assured for him, Bai Mian finally reached the limit of his tolerance. His dark face warped in savagery, and the enormous saber in his hands also buzzed in resonance to his emotions. Turning to Ying Qin, he said, "Allow me to teach this fellow a lesson!"

After saying those words, he immediately walked to the center of the dueling platform, and with eyes as sharp as lightning, he

bellowed, "Zhang Xuan, I shall be your opponent for the first match. Come!"

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Calm down, there's no hurry. Youngsters nowadays sure don't know the virtue of patience."

"You..." Suffering yet another blow, Bai Mian's face turned even darker than before.

We might look young, but we are all in our fifties, you know? You are only a brat in your early twenties, and yet you dare to call us youngsters? How shameless can you get?

"Is your mouth the only thing you have? If you are a man, you'd better come up here this instant!" Knowing that it was impossible for him to win a verbal war with the other party, Bai Mian gritted his teeth in anger.

"I won't take advantage of you; you will surely lose if I head up there. Like I said before, I will find a few freshmen to fight against you. Since I have already given my word, I'll honor it!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands casually.

Ignoring the frenzied Bai Mian above, he turned to the freshmen and asked, "Is there anyone here who was defeated by this fellow and wields a saber?"

Upon hearing the question, the crowd stared at one another bewilderedly.

They'd thought that Zhang shi had only said those words to provoke the seniors into agreeing to his conditions, was he really serious about it?

But they had already lost, and it had been a crushing defeat at that! Even if the wounds they had suffered weren't substantial, there was no way they could defeat them!

"I... lost just now!"

After a short moment of silence, a freshman suddenly waved his

hand and walked out from the crowd.

It was a young man in his mid-twenties with a cultivation of Consonant Spirit realm primary stage. There was a glaring and hideous saber cut on his body, which even though it wasn't a serious wound, it seemed as though he would have been sliced into two if his opponent had put slightly more strength into the attack. It was only due to his opponent's mercy that he was still living at this very moment.

"Not bad!" Zhang Xuan assessed him carefully from head to toe before nodding in approval. "You shall go up to the dueling platform and defeat that fellow later on!"

"I..." The young man leaped in shock. With a conflicted expression, he said, "I am not a match for him. I wasn't even able to withstand a single blow of his previously!"

When he faced Bai Mian just a few moments ago, as soon as the duel started, before he could even raise his saber, he was sliced through by the other party's weapon. Given the huge disparity in strength, he would lose no matter how many times he challenged Bai Mian!

"It's fine. I'll impart a saber art maneuver to you right now, and if you execute it well on the stage later on, you should be able to defeat him within a single blow," Zhang Xuan said.

"A saber art maneuver?" the young man repeated in disbelief.

What use was a single maneuver?

Given the other party's deep comprehension of saber arts, even if he were to learn a hundred saber art maneuvers, there was still no way he could match up to the other party!

"That's right. Pass me your saber!" Paying no heed to the other party's shock, Zhang Xuan nodded nonchalantly.

"Alright..." Even though the freshman had no idea what his faction leader was up to, he still passed his saber over obediently.

"Damn it!" Seeing that Zhang Xuan was really going to impart a saber art to an opponent he had defeated and make him go up against him once more, Bai Mian nearly exploded from fury.

It was already challenging the limits of his tolerance for the other party to act as if victory was already in his grasp... But the other party then went on to choose an opponent he had utterly defeated just a moment ago to teach him a saber art, hoping that he could defeat him...

What kind of game are you playing over here?

I wouldn't be a genius of the Martial Arts School if I could be defeated that easily!

You are too smug!

Arrogant and conceited!

Even the head of the Martial Arts School wouldn't dare to make such claims!

"Bai Mian, since Zhang shi is going impart a freshman a saber art to challenge you, we shouldn't take advantage of them either. Inhibit your senses to avoid learning anything about the saber art ahead of the battle!"

Ying Qin's complexion looked awful as well. However, as a master teacher, he still had a reputation to uphold.

Given their deep comprehension in battle techniques as geniuses of the Martial Arts School, if Zhang Xuan were to teach the freshman before them, it was likely that they might have already mastered the technique before the freshman could even make sense of it. If that happened, would there even be a need to carry on with the duel? The outcome would have already been decided!

Even if they were to win, it would reflect poorly on them.

At the very least, if they were to inhibit their senses to avoid learning anything about the saber art ahead of the battle, there

would be nothing the other party could say upon the conclusion.

"Alright!" Bai Mian nodded.

However, just as he was about to inhibit his senses, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to them and said, "There's no need to go through so much trouble. Since you are students of the Martial Arts School, I believe you should have a deep understanding of battle techniques. Since that's the case, I ask of you to take a look at it during my impartation and correct any mistakes in it!"

Bai Mian and Ying Qin stared at one another blankly with blinking eyes.

That fellow... Was his head stuck in between a gate or did a donkey kick him foolish? You want your faction member to challenge me in the field of saber arts, and yet you still want me to take a look at it in advance?

What kind of logic is that?

Just as Bai Mian was at a loss about what he should do, he suddenly received a telepathic message from Ying Qin. "Since he wants us to take a look, let's just do as he says. He is the one telling us to take a look anyway, so surely he can't complain about it when he loses!"

Ying Qin was the leader of the group, so Bai Mian could only agree to it. Thus, he focused his gaze on the young man imparting a saber art below.

"It will only be a single move, so watch closely!"

Ignoring the dumbfounded crowd, Zhang Xuan chuckled, and with a slight flick of his wrist, he performed a diagonal slash.

The saber moved at an extremely slow speed, as if the slow stroke of a brush on paper.

You call this a saber art? Bai Mian was completely flabbergasted.

Even when he had only just started learning saber arts when he

was five, he had never executed such an ugly move before. In no way was this a saber art! Even the technique used to split lumber in two was much more elegant than this!

He was still wondering what kind of formidable saber art the other party was going to teach the freshman that was capable of defeating him in a single move, but who would have thought that the other party would execute such crap instead?

Are you fooling around with me?

At this moment, Bai Mian wasn't the only one whose mind was in turmoil. The young man whom Zhang Xuan was imparting the saber art to was also nearly on the verge of tears.

He'd thought that, given how confident the faction leader was, he must have had some powerful move to teach him. Never had he thought that it would be something like that...

Given his eye of discernment, he could tell that there was absolutely no skill or anything deeper lying beneath that slash. Such a haphazard, slow, and powerless attack wouldn't even kill an ant, could he really defeat a Grade-4 senior whom he wasn't even able to withstand a single blow from previously with something like this?

In an instant, all of the confidence he had before escaped from his mind.

Just as the young man was overwhelmed by helplessness, not knowing what Zhang Shi was up to, he suddenly heard a faint voice sounding by his ear. Following which, a thought suddenly emerged within his mind, and his body jolted in response. "The crux of my saber art lies not in the form but the intent. This is the essence of my saber art, comprehend it well!"

"This is... Soul Impartation?" Sensing the new battle technique in his mind, the young man's eyes widened in shock.

Soul Impartation was said to be an ability that only 7-star master

teachers were capable of utilizing. Why was their faction leader able to use it as well?

Seeing the young man fall into a daze, Zhang Xuan sent a telepathic message over to chide him. "Don't let your thoughts wander, make good use of the time you have to comprehend the cultivation technique. Take note of the Saber Intent which I have imparted you as well. Use it along with the saber art later in the duel as well!"

"Yes!" Recovering from his astonishment, the young man quickly turned his focus to the saber art in his mind. In there, he felt a concentration of Saber Intent which carried an aura so sharp that it left one feeling powerless before it.

"This..." The young man narrowed his eyes.

He might not be as experienced and knowledgeable as Bai Mian in the field of saber arts, but as a practitioner of the saber as well, he was still able to tell at a single glance how powerful the concentration of Saber Intent was.

As long as he imitated it, his comprehension of the saber would definitely advance by leaps and bounds, reaching a level beyond imagination.

He drove his zhenqi through his body according to the imparted saber art while tapping into the concentration of Saber Intent, and for an instant, it was as if sharp blades had flickered across his eyes. After grasping the rough flow of the technique, the young man took a deep breath and bowed all the way down to his waist level. "Thank you, faction leader!"

Zhang Xuan waved his hands casually. "It's alright. Now, go and defeat that fellow!"

Not only did Bai Mian possess an exceptional aptitude for saber arts, he had also immersed himself in its training for several decades now. Even if Zhang Xuan were to impart the simplified

Heaven's Path Saber Art to the young man, it would still be difficult for him to defeat Bai Mian right now. Thus, Zhang Xuan could only impart a portion of his Saber Intent as well.

Weapon Intent was something fleeting and intangible. Just like a sensation or a certain state of mind, it was impossible to describe it entirely through words. Even if one had comprehended it, it was nigh impossible to transfer Saber Intent to another party.

However, Zhang Xuan cultivated the Heaven's Path Saber Art, which was the most direct interpretation of the quintessence of the world, making his Saber Intent wholesome and flawless. By tapping into his capabilities as a soul oracle as well, it was still possible for him to transfer a portion of his Saber Intent over without it dissipating for the other party to use.

"Yes!" Taking a deep breath, the young man nodded.

With a leap, he stepped onto the dueling platform.

If he had still been a bit apprehensive at the thought of facing Senior Bai Mian earlier, thinking that there was no chance he could defeat the other party, at this very moment, having learned a move from the simplified version of the Heaven's Path Saber Art and harnessing Zhang Xuan's Saber Intent within him, all fear had vanished from his mind.

"You really think you can win against me like that?" Seeing the fellow really leaping up to the dueling platform to challenge him after learning a completely useless saber art which couldn't even be used to chop lumber, Bai Mian felt as if he was about to explode with anger.

"Pardon me!" The young man nodded before raising his saber. In an instant, an aura that felt as if it could split the heavens burst into the air, and in the next moment, the saber was already falling on Bai Mian.

Huala!

Despite the young man's Consonant Spirit realm primary stage cultivation, the cold glint of his saber extended across several zhang instantaneously as if a streak of lightning, tearing through space to crush Bai Mian.

"Lightning Flash of Saber... T-this is an ability that only those who have comprehended Saber Heart can use! How is it possible that you..."

Bai Mian's body trembled in shock. His eyes were bulging as if they would drop off at any moment. He could hear a deafening rumble swiftly crescendoing next to him, as if it was going to cast him into oblivion.

Chapter 782: Wretched Competition

Just like any other weapon, if one's saber art was aligned with nature, one would be able to comprehend Saber Intent, and only after that would it be possible for one to comprehend Saber Heart.

This was similar to how, in swordsmanship, one had to first comprehend Sword Intent before they could comprehend Lower Sword Heart, Middle Sword Heart, and Higher Sword Heart.

Even as a genius of the Martial Arts School, specializing in the study of saber art, Bai Mian was only at Saber Intent pinnacle, a considerable distance away from comprehending Saber Heart.

Yet, the incredibly sharp aura his opponent exuded along with the Lightning Flash of Saber... The other party was actually utilizing a technique that only one who had comprehended Saber Intent could use!

How was that possible?

When he fought with the freshman earlier, he could clearly sense that the latter had only comprehended the bare basics of Saber Intent, a long distance away from matching him. Yet, with just that single saber art maneuver Zhang shi had imparted to him, his comprehension of the saber had actually advanced by so much?

Damn it... Bai Mian's body trembled in shock.

In the midst of a battle, however, he swiftly responded to the freshman's attack, raising his saber to defend against the move.

While he was shocked by the freshman's feat of comprehending Saber Heart in just a short moment, he still didn't think that he would lose.

After all, he had seen the technique Zhang shi had imparted to the freshman, and it was littered with hundreds of flaws. On top of that, it was incredibly slow. As long as he moved swiftly and curbed the other party with speed, he would still be able to

overwhelm him and achieve an easy victory.

Hu!

In that split moment when Bai Mian's enormous Nine-ringed Saber was about to meet the freshman's saber, the freshman's saber abruptly twisted in an elegant arc, bypassing Bai Mian's weapon to cut down on him.

It was as if Bai Mian's defense meant nothing to him at all.

This is... Distillation of the Profound, Surpassing Technique Through Ability? Bai Mian's body stiffened.

While he was studying the saber, a master teacher whom he deeply respected had once told him that upon reaching a certain level of mastery in the saber, one could reduce complex saber arts into simpler and more concise techniques.

But this simplification of the saber art didn't mean that it had become weaker. On the contrary, the lack of extraneous movements meant that there were fewer flaws that one could exploit against the technique, making it even more difficult to oppose.

Bai Mian had thought that such a realm existed in a world far beyond his, and he could possibly never encounter it in his entire life. But... he was seeing it from the freshman at this very moment!

The saber art which the freshmen was executing was not complex at all. It was just a simple slash without anything fancy to it, but it carried a might capable of slicing through anything.

Bai Mian felt as if his entirety had been overwhelmed by the might of the slash. Regardless of what technique he utilized, there was no way he could stand against the slash.

Flee! In that instant, fear took over Bai Mian's instincts. Not daring to take the slash face-on, he immediately retreated hurriedly.

Retracting one's saber art abruptly in the midst of its execution would lead to a backlash in one's zhenqi, but given that Bai Mian was an Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle expert utilizing the might of a Consonant Spirit realm primary stage expert at the moment, he could easily suppress it. Thus, despite the seeming distressed state he was in, he hadn't suffered much damage from this move.

Huala!

Taking two steps back, Bai Mian was just about to raise his saber art to counterattack when the freshmen before him swung his saber furiously once more at him.

This time, the attack felt even sharper and more powerful than before.

The slash had harnessed the remaining force from the previous slash to amplify its might more than twofold. At that moment, it seemed as if a tempest had struck the dueling platform.

This is... Accretion of Saber Might? Bai Mian was on the verge of spurting blood.

He had thought that after the freshman had put his might into the first blow, his strength would surely decline considerably. Who knew that not only would that not be the case, he would even amplify his second slash significantly through accruing the might from the first!

Even the first slash was already beyond his capability, so how could he possibly withstand the might of two slashes at once?

Thus, he retreated once again.

Hu hu!

Seeing Bai Mian retreating once again, the freshman felt a burst of confidence, and he launched his third slash decisively.

As if tributaries gathering into an ocean, the might of the three slashes converged with one another to produce an unopposable

force.

The young man was only at Consonant Spirit realm primary stage, but through harnessing the capability of Saber Heart to converge the might of three slashes together, he could easily overwhelm a Consonant Spirit realm intermediate stage or even an advanced stage cultivator!

No, this won't do... If I allow him to continue building up strength, I'll surely lose without doubt! Realizing the crux of the problem, Bai Mian's face turned grim.

His initial thought had been to dodge the attack, and at the moment the other party's strength died down, he would be able to do as he pleased. But who could have known that the other party's saber art would only grow stronger with time, its might amplifying with each slash?

From the very first dodge he had made, he had already lost the initiative. If he were to continue avoiding the attacks, the odds would only continue stacking against him, and eventually, he would be overwhelmed.

It's do or die... Gritting his teeth, Bai Mian's strength surged frenziedly from his arm as he swung his saber to face the freshman's slash.

Spirit high-tier battle technique, River Severing Furious Saber!

This technique was said to have been created by a Saint realm expert. Out of vengeance for the grievances his lover had suffered, he drew his saber and slashed down furiously, dividing a river several ten thousand meters long in two permanently.

This was the strongest saber art he had after cultivating for so many years.

Even though he was lacking zhenqi to execute it perfectly after suppressing his cultivation to Consonant Spirit realm primary stage, through his deep understanding of saber arts, he still

managed to pull it off.

Saber qi immediately gushed forth from his saber to collide with the freshman's ferocious slash.

Hong long!

With a deafening reverberation, the two sabers collided with one another. In an instant, Bai Mian's face reddened as the might from his River Severing Frenzied Saber was overwhelmed instantaneously. Following which, the amplified slash continued falling furiously toward him, seemingly about to rip his meridians apart.

This is bad... Bai Mian's face turned livid.

While the thought of being unable to withstand the slash had crossed his mind, he didn't think that it would be to such an extent. Despite his retaliation, the slash still continued flying toward him with unabated might.

In that desperate moment, Bai Mian roared furiously, and his cultivation, which he had suppressed initially, began rising rapidly.

Consonant Spirit realm intermediate stage!

Consonant Spirit realm advanced stage!

Consonant Spirit realm pinnacle!

Cosmos Bridge realm primary stage!

His cultivation had to rise by an entire realm before he was able to dispel the overwhelming saber qi before him.

Peng!

Due to Bai Mian's forceful counterattack, the freshman was knocked back, and a mouthful of fresh blood spewed from his mouth.

Even though he had sustained some damage from the last attack,

his eyes were glowing with excitement.

"You have lost!"

The other party had been forced to unseal his cultivation in order to withstand his blow, which meant that he had broken the rules, and thus, he had lost!

Upon hearing those words, Bai Mian's face turned as pale as a sheet of paper, and he muttered feebly, "I... I have lost..."

There was no other choice for him but to admit it. So many eyes had seen him being forced into a corner, unable to retaliate at all. This was his utter defeat!

It was just a moment ago that this freshman had been defeated by him in a single blow, but in the next moment, he was defeated by the latter instead... Despite being the person in question here, the situation before him felt so mystical that he could hardly believe what had just happened.

That Zhang shi had only imparted a single move to the freshman... and the latter had gained sufficient strength to defeat him? Just how in the world was that possible?

Bai Mian wasn't the only one who couldn't get to grips with the situation. All of the freshmen beneath also felt as if their eyeballs were going to pop out of their sockets.

They had witnessed the prowess of the freshman before and after he had learned Zhang shi's saber art... To allow the freshman to gain the power to defeat a genius of the Martial Arts School just by imparting a single move to him, this was just way too exaggerated!

Was their faction leader in truth a deity in disguise?

"Faction leader, I-I succeeded! I managed to defeat a Grade-4 student! I..."

Upon hearing Bai Mian's confirmation, the young man immediately leaped down from the dueling platform excitedly and

rushed up to Zhang Xuan with clenched fists.

Having executed the saber art, he understood just how powerful the move which the faction leader had imparted to him was. As long as he studied it thoroughly and practiced diligently, his understanding of the saber would surely soar, allowing him to become a saber master!

As such, it was inevitable that he would be so excited.

Pah!

However, before he could finish his words, Zhang shi abruptly slapped him on his head with a livid expression, as if a senior chastising a disappointing junior.

"Faction leader..."

The freshman was stunned, not knowing what was going on.

Why was the faction leader angry? He had defeated his opponent!

"After that disappointing performance of yours, you are still in the mood to celebrate? Honestly, can you even call what you have just did saber art? In the very first move, if only you had utilized the full extent of your strength, your opponent couldn't have dodged at all. It was a duel you could have won in a single move, and yet you dragged it on for three moves. Don't you feel ashamed of yourself?"

The more Zhang Xuan spoke, the angrier and more disappointed he felt. If he could, he would truly have wanted to knock some sense into the fellow.

No matter what, the other party was a half 5-star master teacher. How could he be so slow on the uptake?

He had personally imparted a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Saber Art to the other party and even transferred a portion of his Saber Intent to him. And yet, that fellow still required three blows to defeat his opponent. That was a disgrace!

Win in a single move... Bai Mian nearly spurted blood upon hearing those words.

I am a Grade-4 student, a genius of the Martial Arts School... It's already incredible that you were able to grant a freshman the strength to defeat me within three blows just by imparting a saber art to him, and yet you are still disappointed by it...

"Yes..." Hearing the chastising from the faction leader, the young man could only hang his head in shame.

The faction leader was right. If he put his full strength into the very first blow, Bai Mian would have surrendered immediately. Things wouldn't have dragged on to the third blow, Bai Mian wouldn't have resorted to a desperate struggle, and he wouldn't have been injured either.

"Alright, at least you are repenting. However, take note of this in the future. No matter who your opponent is, you have to strike decisively. The slightest bit of hesitation could cost your life!" Seeing the other party's regretful expression, Zhang Xuan's rage finally alleviated slightly.

Sighing deeply, he waved his hands and turned to the dueling platform once more. "Which one of you is next?"

"I shall be your opponent!" Yuan Gang stepped forward.

Bai Mian's defeat had shocked him deeply as well. At this point, he knew better than to underestimate the young man standing before him.

"Alright." Zhang Xuan nodded. "Who was defeated by him earlier?"

"Me!"

"Faction leader, I lost as well!"

"You didn't lose as badly as I did. Allow me to do it!"

"The hell you lost badly, you only fell from the stage! Look at me,

I was even slapped by him. I am in the most wretched state of all. Let me challenge him!"

"Look, I even spewed blood! Let me do it..."

...

Upon Zhang Xuan's call, a huge commotion broke out beneath the stage. All of those who had been injured previously immediately rushed up indignantly, howling in agitation.

They had witnessed how the freshman who had been defeated in a single blow earlier turning the tables on Bai Mian after Zhang shi's guidance. If they could learn a thing or two from Zhang shi as well, their fighting prowess might be able to soar like his.

With such a good opportunity lying before them, only a fool would give it up!

"To think a day would come that I would see such a sight before me..."

On the stage, Yuan Gang and Ying Qin's mouths twitched.

The heck!

The freshmen had always gone out of their way to avoid any confrontations with their seniors—after all, the disparity in strength was as clear as day. Never had they seen any freshman volunteering to challenge the seniors so energetically before.

Moreover, it was one thing for them to fight over the opportunity, but screw their competition over who was in a more wretched state!

The more wretched one's state was, the weaker they were in the previous confrontation.

To still be vying for the opportunity after being defeated so tragically, what do you take us seniors for?

Aren't you all being too arrogant!

Watching as the crowd below argued over who was in a worse state, Ying Qin's face turned more and more livid. There were even a few of the freshmen who had regretful expressions on their faces, as if lamenting how they hadn't allowed Yuan Gang to get a few more punches on them.

Eventually, Ying Qin came to the limit of his tolerance, and he sent a telepathic message to Yuan Gang. "Make sure to subdue them decisively. You mustn't show them any mercy at all! It'll be a grave humiliation on us and the True Helios Faction if we lose again!"

In truth, Bai Mian's loss had already introduced some doubts into their minds. They realized that they had grossly underestimated Zhang Shi's capability. However, the arrow was already nocked, and it was too late for them to back down.

No matter what, they had to win the next round. Otherwise, they just might end up becoming the gatekeepers of the Xuanxuan Faction.

"Don't worry, I'll give it my all!" Yuan Gang nodded grimly.

While the duo was speaking, Zhang Xuan was done picking out his next competitor as well. It was a young fellow whose face was bruised to the point that there was not the slightest uninjured area to be seen. His nose and teeth were slightly crooked, and a stream of blood flowed uncontrollably from the edge of his mouth.

I remember that fellow! But... I don't recall beating him up so heavily? Could it be that, just so he would appear more wretched than the others, he chose to beat himself up?

Upon seeing the appearance of the other party, Yuan Gang's eyelids began twitching uncontrollably, and he nearly keeled over.

Chapter 783: Challenging Zhang shi

As a 5-star high-tier master teacher, he had an eidetic memory. When he was fighting with the other party, he had only used the Light Breezy Hands to knock him off the dueling platform.

Yet, at this very moment, the other party's facial features were warped hideously, and blood was dripping down from his mouth... Just how freaking severe was his injuries?

If he had suffered such severe injuries earlier in the battle with him, he couldn't possibly still be standing here. Someone would have already sent him to a physician!

Most likely, he had beaten himself up intentionally just so he could receive Zhang shi's guidance... Or else, the situation simply didn't make sense!

Just as Yuan Gang was feeling extremely frustrated within, Zhang Xuan begun imparting a battle technique to the other party.

In his view, it was highly likely that Bai Mian had only been defeated by the freshman due to his carelessness. Thus, this time, he widened his eyes to pay attention to every single detail regarding the fist art which Zhang shi was imparting to the severely injured young man.

However, just like the previous saber art, no matter how he looked at it, he just couldn't see any deeper technique or intention behind it.

After a while, he was completely bewildered.

He could easily execute a fist art like that back when he was only three... Did Zhang shi really think that he could be defeated with that?

Nevertheless, there is something peculiar about Zhang shi. I should remain on my guard. Later, I shall attack my opponent as soon as we get on the stage!

Unable to comprehend the essence hidden within Zhang Xuan's fist art, Yuan Gang decided to just achieve a swift victory.

Given his deeper insight into battle techniques and the control of his strength, as long as he could gain the initiative, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to defeat a freshman swiftly.

Right after he had decided his plan for the battle, the bruised young man finally stepped onto the dueling platform.

"Senior!" the young man greeted.

"Let's hurry up and get it over with," Yuan Gang said.

Crrk crrk crrk!

With a series of creaking sounds, Yuan Gang's slender body abruptly grew taller, and his limbs grew longer as well.

Spirit high-tier battle technique, Supreme Ape Transformation!

Having spent more than a decade cultivating this battle technique, he had already fully grasped the essence of it, allowing him to bring out the full might of the technique.

"Here I come!"

Without giving the other party an opportunity to even respond, Yuan Gang immediately charged forward as soon as the duel began.

His movement was as swift as the silhouette of an eagle swooping down for its prey. In the blink of an eye, his figure was already standing right before the bruised young man, and with his fingers bent into hooks, he clawed ferociously at him.

The crux of the Supreme Art Transformation lay in its speed, and the attacks were mainly hacking, clawing, and grabbing.

This was a technique that an elder of the academy had come up with after studying the fighting technique of apes.

Sharp glints reminiscent of daggers flashed from the edges of

Yuan Gang's fingers as they headed right for the bruised young man's body.

Not bad!

Looking at how Yuan Gang went for his opponent decisively without holding back, Yin Qing heaved a sigh of relief.

They had already lost a match. If they were to lose another, they would have lost the bet.

It was fortunate that Yuan Gang wasn't an inflexible person who allowed his pride to get over his head. Knowing that there was something peculiar about his opponent, he opted to go with his strongest move right from the start.

"Yuan Gang's claw harnesses great power. If I were his opponent, I would first take a step back and wait for the momentum of his attack to die down before retaliating," Ying Qin muttered contemplatively.

As peers from the same student faction, Ying Qin often sparred with Yuan Gang, so he had a clear idea of how fearsome the Supreme Ape Transformation was. Due to the formidable speed of the technique, it was nearly impossible to dodge at close quarters.

Curious to see how Yuan Gang's opponent would respond to his attack, Ying Qin turned his gaze back to the stage, only to see the other party standing still on the spot, retaliating to Yuan Gang's attack with a punch of his own.

"This..." Ying Qin blinked in shock.

Was the opponent intending to trade blow for blow?

But Yuan Gang's claw was far swifter than his fist! If he were to remain in the same position, he would surely be struck by Yuan Gang's claw first!

Hu la!

Before the doubt in Ying Qin's mind could vanish, he suddenly

saw the speed of the opponent's fist abruptly accelerate. At the current speed, it was likely that both of their attacks would land on each other at the same time.

In other words... the opponent was aiming for a mutually assured destruction!

Peng!

As Ying Qin had predicted, the duo struck one another squarely.

Deng deng deng! Deng deng deng!

Yuan Gang was knocked eight steps backward from the impact of his opponent's fist while his opponent was left with deep claw marks on his chest.

"Good!"

Despite being injured in the first encounter, the bruised young man didn't seem to have lost his courage in the least. On the contrary, he grew more and more excited. Without any hesitation, he charged right toward Yuan Gang once again.

Regardless of how profound Yuan Gang's move was and how much damage he would sustain from them, his focus was only on one thing—landing his punch on Yuan Gang.

Peng!

They traded another blow. Even though the bruised young man was injured, Yuan Gang didn't fare any better either. Suffering two consecutive heavy blows, his face paled, and with a sweet sensation at the back of his throat, he spurted a mouthful of blood.

I finally understand... Ying Qin narrowed his eyes as he tightened his fists in agitation. It is indeed a good plan. Zhang Shi sure is a formidable opponent...

At this moment, he finally understood the reasoning behind the bruised young man's fighting style.

Ultimately, one couldn't become a master at close quarter combat

just by learning a single move. It required the accumulation of experience and refinement through practice over countless years. Understanding this, Zhang shi decisively imparted a fist art with overwhelming offensive ability.

Since it is impossible for us to win in a battle of skill, we might as well abandon the very notion of it. We shall go head to head with you instead! Even if we suffer grievous wounds in the midst of doing so, we won't let you get off the hook easily either!

If you land a blow on me, I will make sure to return the favor twofold to you! As long as I possess sufficient strength and speed in my attacks, the one who will fall ultimately will be you!

How vicious!

It seems like Zhang shi didn't select his candidates randomly. This fellow was willing to even punch himself in order to earn the opportunity, and that reflects how tenacious he is... Ying Qin thought with a livid expression.

Honestly speaking, he did wonder why Zhang Xuan had chosen the person who had beaten himself up. Given the latter's sharp eye of discernment, surely he should have been able to tell that those wounds were self-inflicted?

But at this moment, he realized that it was an intentional action on the other party's part.

If a person was willing to hurt himself for an opportunity, how could he possibly back down in a crucial moment?

A person with such a personality was the most suited for a battle of trading blows!

It seems like... Yuan Gang is going to lose! Ying Qin shook his head.

They were all currently of the same cultivation realm, but considering the incredible might behind the bruised young man's fist art, as well as his determination to win the duel, it was just a

matter of time before Yuan Gang fell in defeat.

It was not that Yuan Gang was weak, but such a battle simply wasn't his forte. The Supreme Ape Transformation which he cultivated was built on the natural instincts of apes, and this included their natural aversion toward danger as well. As such, Yuan Gang's instinctual response toward harm was not to fight but to flee.

Naturally, Yuan Gang also understood the bruised young man's intentions, and he knew that if he wanted to win, he had to attack decisively and persevere to the very end. However, the contradiction between his instincts and actions resulted in an inevitable hesitation in his movements, which hindered him from fighting decisively.

Peng peng peng!

As expected, after trading five blows, Yuan Gang finally reached the limit of his perseverance, and after a stagger, his body collapsed to the ground weakly. He had been defeated by a freshman.

That ape guy is not bad! Zhang Xuan nodded in commendation.

The Heaven's Path Fist Art harnessed immense strength behind each of its blows. Even though Zhang Xuan had only imparted a move from its simplified version to the bruised young man, it was still an incredible feat for Yuan Gang to endure five punches before collapsing.

"Faction leader, I won..." The bruised young man leaped down the dueling platform excitedly and bowed deeply to his faction leader with respect gleaming in his eyes.

Previously, when he fought against Yuan Gang, he was unable to even take a single blow from him. Yet, after receiving his faction leader's guidance, he was able to overwhelm Yuan Gang and defeat him. Regardless of whether it was his faction leader's grasp over

battle strategy or his comprehension of battle techniques, they had reached a level beyond his imagination.

"Good, you have done well. Drink this!" Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and passed a gourd over.

"Yes!" Taking the gourd, the bruised young man gulped down the fine wine within, leaving not a single drop behind. The next moment, he suddenly felt a tingling feeling throughout his body, and the injuries he had sustained swiftly healed.

"That is Saint recovery medicine..." The bruised young man widened his eyes in shock.

In order to treat his injuries, his faction leader was willing to even take out a gourd of Saint recovery medicine for his consumption. To go this far for him...

Faction leader, from this day onward, I shall remain a member of your faction until the moment of my death!

There's nothing in this world that can change my decision...

...

"Zhang shi's means are indeed incredible!" Seeing the freshman who was pummeled recovering entirely from his wounds in the blink of an eye while Yuan Gang was still convulsing on the ground, on the brink of death, Ying Qin shook his head and sighed deeply before turning to look at Zhang Xuan with a profound gaze.

Regardless of whether it was his ability to impart techniques, his grasp over battle techniques, or his charisma around his subordinates, he was indeed worthy of respect.

Taking a deep breath, Ying Qin grasped his spear tightly and said, "Having lost two consecutive rounds, we have already lost the bet. However... I find it hard to come to terms with my defeat without witnessing Zhang shi's prowess with my own eyes. Thus, I hope that Zhang shi will agree to a fight against me!"

As Zhang Xuan's side had already achieved two out of three wins, the trio had already lost the bet. However, having yet to force Zhang Xuan into action, he couldn't help but feel a little indignant inside. Thus, he wanted to challenge him so as to see how powerful the young man, who could give the other freshmen the strength to defeat his peers through just a moment of guidance, was.

If he lost, so be it. He would have no regrets whatsoever at the very least.

"You wish to challenge me?" Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before nodding. "Alright then."

This fellow with the spear was likely to be the strongest of the three. He should be a fine opponent for him to test out his newfound strength with the advancement in his cultivation he had made recently.

Thus, Zhang Xuan leaped up to the dueling platform as well.

While being able to guide others to victory was indeed a testimony to his prowess, it wasn't as impactful as witnessing it in a battle. Only in a real battle could the full extent of one's skills be seen.

"Since Zhang Shi possesses the cultivation of Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle, I shall suppress my cultivation to that of your level too..." Seeing the other party agree to it, Ying Qin nodded before forcefully suppressing his cultivation of Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle down two realms.

"Suppress your cultivation?" Seeing Ying Qin's action, Zhang Xuan shook his head. "You will die like that..."

He had cultivated his soul, physical body, and zhenqi, along with his Eye of Insight and Library of Heaven's Path, that fellow wouldn't even be much of a match even if he were to fight him at Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle.

Yet, he was still thinking of suppressing his cultivation. How

bold!

"Zhang shi, don't worry. Even though you have a deep understanding of battle techniques, I am not that bad either, especially in the field of spearmanship. I can proudly say that there are none at my level who can rival me!" Ying Qin replied confidently.

He had seen what Zhang shi had done, and that was indeed impressive. However, he had confidence in his ability as well.

This was the trust he had in himself after countless years of sweat, tears, and blood honing his spearmanship.

As long as he had a spear in hand, he would be able to face any enemy.

"Alright then..." Seeing how confident the other party was, there was nothing else Zhang Xuan could say.

Seeing Zhang Xuan standing barehanded on the dueling platform, Ying Qin asked doubtfully, "Zhang shi, where's your weapon?"

"My weapon? You have already suppressed your cultivation; if I were to use a weapon on top of that, I would truly be bullying you... How about this then?"

Zhang Xuan turned to Ruohuan gongzi and said, "Ruohuan, I recall that there is a feather duster beneath the stool over there. Bring it over to me!"

Chapter 784: Zhang shi, Isn't Yours Too Short?

Feather duster? Ying Qin's body swayed weakly from side to side.

The spear in my hand is a Spirit high-tier weapon crafted using the finest Xuan Jade of the Eastern Sea. It has a length of 2.3 meters, and the tip is specially made out of Gelid Jadeite Essence, possessing incomparable sharpness capable of slicing through metal and carrying the effect to slow down the thoughts of one's enemy...

I have such a powerful weapon in my hands, and yet you wish to fight against me using a feather duster?

That item is only made out of ordinary bamboo! It would be sliced into two with even the slightest touch, how in the world do you expect to fight against me?

Not only him, Ruohuan gongzi was completely stunned as well.

Using a feather duster to deal with a Spirit high-tier weapon? Zhang shi... don't you think you are going too far humiliating the other party?

But... what is with the inexplicable joy I am feeling at the sight of this?

"Great, I'll be right back!" With his lips curling up uncontrollably out of excitement, Ruohuan gongzi immediately ran off.

"You..." Seeing the gleeful look on Ruohuan gongzi's face, Ying Qin felt his innards boiling with fury. "Zhang shi, I am earnestly challenging to a duel, and since you have agreed to it, I hope that you can take it seriously. As fellow master teachers, don't you think it's improper for you to humiliate me like that?"

"Humiliate?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "I am truly not trying to humiliate

you, and you aren't qualified for me to go that far either. The reason I am not using a spear against you is due to the excessive power of my spear art. I fear that I might accidentally kill you if I fail to control my strength well, and that would be very troublesome. While a feather duster is indeed a little weaker, it's much easier to control it, so I will be able to avoid injuring you!"

He really didn't have any intention of humiliating Ying Qin.

He could see why the latter would think so, but if he wanted to humiliate him, he could have easily defeated him in a single blow without any weapon at hand as well.

Honestly speaking, it was out of respect for the other party that he chose to even use a feather duster as a weapon.

"You..." Ying Qin was so furious that he started laughing uproariously instead. His eyes narrowed into menacing slits as he bellowed, "Fine! Let me see how powerful your spear art is then!"

For a top Grade-4 student to be told by a freshman that he was fearful that he might accidentally kill him... Ying Qin felt so much fury boiling within him that he could've charged forward to tear the other party apart then and there.

In the midst of their conversation, Ruohuan gongzi had already gathered more than a dozen feather dusters from the surroundings and threw them onto the stage for Zhang Xuan to choose.

Zhang Xuan casually picked up one of them before turning to Ying Qin. "We can start now."

"You're seeking death!"

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was truly intending to use a feather duster to fight against him, Ying Qin roared in fury as the spear in his hand pierced forward with might reminiscent of a massive dragon.

A gale so powerful that it felt as if it could tear one into shreds whipped up in the surroundings.

Infused with zhenqi, the Spirit high-tier spear pierced through the air, producing a deafening sonic boom as it headed straight for Zhang Xuan.

"Strong..."

Upon seeing the move, Luo Xuan, Ruohuan gongzi, and the others couldn't help but narrow their eyes.

Even though Ying Qin had already suppressed his cultivation to Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle, the power that he displayed in his attack was still far beyond what they could withstand.

Perhaps it might be an exaggeration to say that this move was unrivaled by all Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator, but it was no joke to say that less than a handful of Cosmos Bridge realm cultivators in the academy would be able to take this blow.

In fact, most Perfect Harmonization realm primary stage cultivators would be forced to retreat in the face of this move, not daring to confront it head-on.

Could Zhang Shi really be able to stand against such a powerful attack with a feather duster in hand?

Everyone subconsciously turned their gazes to Zhang Xuan, only to see him standing nonchalantly before the other party's might. A slight smile emerged on his face as he stretched his hand forward and snapped his forefinger and middle finger together.

Kacha!

Just like that, the incomparably powerful spear was held lightly in Zhang Xuan's fingertips.

As if fallen deep into a marsh, the ferocious dragon of a spear from a moment ago found itself incapable of moving no matter how hard it struggled.

Pah pah pah pah!

While holding onto the spear, Zhang Xuan raised his feather

duster and struck Ying Qin's face relentlessly.

In just the blink of an eye, crimson streaks had already filled the latter's face.

"The heck... it is actually possible for such a situation to happen in a battle?"

"Why does it feel like an adult caning a child?"

"Indeed... This is supposed to be a serious battle, but this..."

...

The crowd beneath the stage was stunned.

When they saw Ying Qin's spear art earlier, they had nearly been scared out of their wits, thinking that Zhang shi would be defeated by it. Who could have known that Zhang shi would end up stopping the spear with just two mere fingers instead!

No matter how hard Ying Qin tugged or pushed, the spear was firmly trapped between Zhang Xuan's fingers, refusing to budge at all. This had left him open to the lashing of Zhang Xuan's feather duster.

Everyone had thought that this would be an intense battle between two experts, but in the end... it turned out to be a one-sided slaughter instead!

"Ah!" Ying Qin hadn't expected the other party to be skillful enough to even grab a spear harnessing such immense might so easily. Panicked, he struggled with all his might, but he was unable to pull the spear out of Zhang Xuan's fingers at all. Flustered, he howled, "Let go!"

At the same time, he gathered all of the zhenqi in his body to pull the spear back to him with his full might.

As long as the spear remained in the other party's grasp, he would be powerless against him.

"You want it back? Here you go!"

Feeling the force pulling the spear away from his fingers growing stronger and stronger, Zhang Xuan abruptly let go with a smile.

Deng deng deng deng!

The sudden disappearance of the force from Zhang Xuan's side caused Ying Qin to fall backward abruptly. In an attempt to stop himself from tumbling back, he ended up leaving a series of heavy footprints in the dueling platform.

"You! Die!"

Even though Ying Qin was left in quite an awkward position, having succeeded in pulling his spear out, he felt another burst of confidence returning to him. With a roaring whiz from his spear, he swept it toward the Zhang Xuan.

Since the pierce failed to work, surely a sweep would be fine!

In the next moment, however, the figure before him suddenly blurred, and a pair of fingers abruptly materialized from nowhere and easily halted the movement of his spear.

What is going on... Ying Qin's body shook wildly.

In order to prevent the other party from grabbing his spear, he had put his full might into the sweep. How did the other party still manage to grab his spear?

That should have been impossible!

Before he could give it much thought, the feather duster began raining blows down on him once more.

Even though it was only a stick made out of bamboo, it had zhenqi infused into it. As such, a lashing from it felt even more painful than being whipped by a leather belt. With just a few strikes, Ying Qin's face was already covered in lacerations, and blood was dripping down his face profusely.

"Damn it!"

Despite facing an opponent with the same cultivation level as

him at the moment, he still ended up being struck bloody by a feather duster. Ying Qin felt as if he was going to go mad.

With an abrupt pounce, he leaped upward while tugging the spear forcefully out of Zhang Xuan's grip.

Exerting his full might until the point which his zhenqi was about to explode from overexertion, the other party's force on his spear abruptly disappeared once again.

Huala!

As a result, Ying Qin's figure fell back yet again. However, this time, before he could steady his figure, Zhang Xuan had rushed forward to grab his spear once more, and the feather duster began lashing him again.

The heck... Ying Qin was on the verge of tears.

He had fought many battles ever since he had started cultivating, but never had he had a duel like that before.

The moment his spear shot forth, the other party rushed to grab his spear and lash him viciously. While he was trying to pull his spear out of the other party's grip, the other party would abruptly let go, resulting in his loss of balance. But yet again, making use of his state of vulnerability as a result of his loss of balance, the other party would charge forward to grab his spear again...

That's cheating!

Can't we have a proper duel?

"AHHHHH!"

The more he thought about it, the more furious Ying Qin felt. Fury raged furiously in his chest like blazing flames.

Hong long!

In his state of rage, he finally let go of the suppression of his zhenqi, resulting in his cultivation swiftly surging back to normal.

Perfect Harmonization realm primary stage... Perfect Harmonization realm intermediate stage... Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle!

In the blink of an eye, he had reached the peak of his strength once again.

Upon the recovery of his strength, he immediately turned his attention back to Zhang Shi once more, seemingly about to charge at him again, only to see the latter had already retreated several meters away.

Holding a feather duster in his hand, the other party questioned him nonchalantly, "Are you admitting defeat?"

"Admitting defeat? Impossible! Through the battle we had, I realized that you aren't merely a Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle cultivator... Do you dare fight against me at my full strength?" Ying Qin gritted his teeth.

After being struck so viciously on his face, how could he possibly admit defeat and let the other party get away just like that?

Besides, considering how the other party could grab his spear so easily and firmly such that even he was unable to extract it from his fingers, that showed that his strength far exceeded any Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle cultivator. Since that was the case... even if he were to use his full strength against the other party, that couldn't be considered bullying.

"Fine by me," Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

In the first place, he had intended for Ying Qin to use his full strength, but the latter obstinately insisted on suppressing his cultivation for the sake of fairness. This situation worked better with him; he would finally be able to try out his strength like that.

"Let's start then." Zhang Xuan raised his feather duster to gesture for the other party to come at him.

"Wait a moment!" Seeing Zhang Xuan's movement, Ying Qin

couldn't help but recall how badly he had been thrashed just a moment ago, and he shuddered in fear. Gritting his teeth, he said, "I wish to compete with you in terms of spear art, but your feather duster is too short, turning the duel into a close quarter battle instead. May I ask of you to use a spear to fight with me?"

What Zhang Xuan had done earlier—grabbing his spear and lashing him viciously—couldn't be considered as a spear art but close quarter offense.

A spear's length granted it a long reach, but at the same time, it also limited its utility in a narrow space.

He couldn't allow the other party to turn the battle into a close quarter combat like before, or else even with his restored cultivation, it was extremely likely that he would end up badly thrashed like before.

"Close quarter combat? Spear?"

How could Zhang Xuan possibly not understand the other party's intention? Letting out a soft chuckle, he said, "You mean that... my feather duster is too short for you, so you want me to fight you with a longer weapon?"

"That's right!" Ying Qin nodded.

"Fine by me as well!" Zhang Xuan nodded before turning to Ruohuan gongzi. "Help me tie these feather dusters together, end-to-end."

"Yes!" Ruohuan gongzi nodded as he leaped onto the dueling platform and tied the feather dusters together using some string from his storage ring.

With more than a dozen feather dusters connected end to end, the ultimate product was more than ten-meters long, and it resembled a long wooden branch.

It was truly a novel sight to watch as the bunch of feather dusters rose up like a flagpole, and countless feathers swayed amidst the

wind.

"This should be long enough, right?" Zhang Xuan asked as he took the long rod over.

"Of course!" Ying Qin's eyes lit up.

Due to his spear being too long, he had been unable to display his prowess in close quarters, which resulted in the eventual lashing he'd received. However, now that Zhang Xuan had made his weapon ten meters long, the tables would be turned on him.

He had no doubt that the other party would be completely crushed, and he would be able to exact vengeance for the humiliation he'd received.

Hearing the other party's approval, Zhang Xuan flicked his 'long spear' made out of more than a dozen feather dusters to the side, preparing himself for the battle. He then said nonchalantly, "I hope that you won't complain anymore when you lose this time."

"Of course, I won't. However, you are the one who should be careful!" Ying Qin replied confidently.

The feather duster spear was more than ten meters long. Provided he could get within a distance of ten meters of Zhang Xuan, the other party would be helpless before him.

Excited, Ying Qin swung his spear casually and said, "Let's begin!"

Seeing the other party's confidence, Zhang Xuan raised his spear vertically upright, as if a lightning rod connecting to the heavens. At the same time, he beckoned with his left hand and chuckled lightly. "Come, I'll give you a 39 meters head start!" 1

Chapter 785: The True Spear Art

In his previous life, Zhang Xuan had once seen a picture of a small person holding a forty-meter-long saber taunting his opponent, saying that he would first allow him to get a 39 meters head start.

At this moment, this was exactly the kind of feeling Zhang Xuan got.

With more than a dozen feather dusters connected together, his weapon seemed just like a flagpole. In comparison, his enemy's spear felt no different from a short twig.

With such a long weapon in hand, he felt as if he had nothing to fear.

"Let's begin then!" With a roar, Ying Qin stepped off with his right foot and charged straight at Zhang Xuan, aiming to close the distance as soon as possible.

Considering the length of Zhang Xuan's weapon, as long as he could get within a ten-meter radius of him, he should be safe from the other party's offense.

The other party had previously used a feather duster to lash him. With this opportunity, he would return the favor to him!

"Do you really think it'll be that easy for you to close in on me?"

How could Zhang Xuan possibly not understand Ying Qin's intentions? With a slight smile, he executed the Heaven's Path Movement Art and drew an additional ten-meter distance away from Ying Qin in an instant before stabbing his feather duster spear toward Ying Qin.

Hu!

A feather duster spear ten-meter long couldn't possibly be as agile as a spear or as swift as a sword. Yet, for some reason, it still

managed to block Ying Qin's advancement.

Or to be exact, the spear was precisely positioned such that there was no way for Ying Qin to avoid it if he were to continue charging forward with his current momentum.

Damn it! Ying Qin's complexion turned awful upon realizing that his advancement had been impeded.

He immediately twisted his body to dodge the other party's attack before rushing to another location to charge forward once more. However, just as he was about to do so, the feather duster spear appeared right before him once again.

The speed this time around was far swifter than previously. Moreover, it was directed at one of his mingmen, leaving him no choice but to avoid it as well.

"Humph!"

He immediately leaped backward to dodge the attack before rushing at another direction.

With a burst of his zhenqi as an Ethereal Treading realm pinnacle expert, his speed was as swift as a soaring dragon.

But... despite his speed, the Zhang Xuan's feather duster spear seemed to be even faster than him. Every time he attempted to approach the other party, a spear would abruptly emerge to block his path. It was as if the Zhang Xuan knew where he would attack from.

As such, despite the bulky and burdensome weapon the opponent was wielding, Ying Qin felt as if he was facing an impregnable fortress. No matter how hard he tried, he simply couldn't breach the other party's defenses.

"This..."

Ruohuan gongzi and the others swallowed a mouthful of saliva as they widened their eyes in shock.

They had thought that it would be hard for Zhang shi to deal with Ying Qin when the latter released the suppression on his cultivation. After all, two realms was indeed a huge gap to overcome. But who would have thought that with just a feather duster spear, Zhang shi would be able to ward off the other party perfectly, leaving him prowling helplessly at a ten-meter distance away?

While this couldn't be consisted a victory, considering that Zhang shi was facing an opponent with a far higher cultivation than him, it was indubitably an impressive feat.

It was at that moment that someone amidst the crowd suddenly shouted, "Do you all feel that there's something weird about this battle? I can't really put my finger on it, but... it doesn't feel like a duel at all!"

"Indeed!" Luo Xuan frowned as he felt that there was something amiss with the situation as well. After a moment of contemplation, he muttered, "It is like... toying like a monkey?"

"Now that you say it, it does seem like that..." Ruohuan gongzi nodded in agreement.

Words of agreement rippled through the crowd as well.

At this moment, it seemed as if the awe-inspiring Ying Qin from a moment ago was being played by Zhang shi like a monkey. Zhang shi would stand, unmoving, on the spot and flick his feather duster spear slightly, and Ying Qin would suddenly leap backward and rush off in another direction before attempting to charge toward Zhang Xuan again.

But before he could charge in, the bamboo spear would arrive before him, and he would leap backward once more...

Such a cycle had been ongoing since the start of the battle.

Honestly, it truly resembled those street performers played with their monkeys.

To play a Grade-4 student like a monkey...

Zhang shi sure was incredible!

Luo Xuan, Ruohuan gongzi, and the others had once viewed Zhang shi as a target for comparison, but upon seeing this sight, they could only swallow a mouthful of saliva and watch silently.

Even if they were to cultivate for another ten years, it was doubtful they would be able to wield the strength he had at this very moment!

...

"Damn it!"

As the crowd below realized that, Ying Qin had also noticed this detail as well. Furious, he gritted his teeth so tightly that they were on the verge of chipping off.

He had thought that with the opponent wielding such a long weapon, as long as he could get into close quarters, he would be able to subdue him easily. Who could have known that the other party would be so skilled with a spear? Every single move that the other party made casually came at trajectory that was difficult for him to defend, and they were all aimed at his mingmen as well.

In other words... there was no way for him to get close at all!

At this moment, the short reach of his spear became his weakness instead. The other party's spear was more than ten meters long whereas his was only two meters. With his spear being unable to reach the other party, how could the duel go on?

Shouldn't the one with the shorter weapon be at an advantage?

Why does it feel as if I am the one being disadvantaged instead?

If this goes on, not only will I lose, I will even become a laughingstock! Ying Qin thought with a livid expression as he heard the comments from the crowd below.

If word were to spread that he had been toyed with like a monkey

by a freshman, there would be no way he could keep his head up before his peers and his juniors.

That spear of his is crafted by connecting feather dusters together, so its quality is subpar. If I directly clash with it, even if I'm injured in the encounter, I should be able to snap it! Ying Qin pondered as he flitted across the battlefield.

There was no way he could achieve victory under the current circumstances. The urgent matter at hand was to find a way to close in on his opponent, and the only way to do so was to snap the feather duster spear...

Considering that those feather dusters were only made of ordinary materials, with his strength as an Ethereal Treading realm expert, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to reduce them to dust with his zhenqi.

Alright, I'll do just that then! Gritting his teeth, Ying Qin pumped his zhenqi furiously, and with his arms covering his chest, he charged forward furiously, paying no heed to the movement of the feather duster spear at all.

Kacha! Kacha!

As he had predicted, the feather duster spear was unable to withstand his might at all.

Due to the long length of the feather duster and the low quality of the materials used to craft it, it was impossible for Zhang Xuan to pump zhenqi into it efficiently to reinforce its resilience. Thus, upon contact with Ying Qin's rampaging zhenqi, it was swiftly reduced to dust.

"This is bad..."

"That's cheating!"

Anxiety swept through the crowd as they watched the sight.

Zhang shi had already given him a huge advantage by wielding a

feather duster spear, and yet he shamelessly destroyed it. That was cheating!

"Let's see how you stop me now that I am already right before you!" With a roar, Ying Qin raised his spear and pierced right at Zhang Xuan.

At his current proximity from the other party, his spear wielded the absolute advantage in the collision. With this blow, he would win the duel!

"Do you think that you can win with just this?" Seeing the other party's excited look, Zhang Xuan shook his head. He abruptly released his grip, and the feather duster spear fell to the ground.

He let go of his weapon? Ying Qin was taken aback by the abrupt turn of events.

A weapon was a cultivator's most prized possession. It was an unspoken rule to never release one's weapon in battle—what would a spear master be without his spear? How could Zhang Xuan simply throw his weapon aside like that?

At that moment, the young man before Ying Qin chuckled lightly as he spoke. "A weapon is just an extension of one's limbs. A spear art doesn't require a spear to be executed!"

The next moment, Zhang Xuan leaped into the sky and his aura abruptly changed.

Boundless Spear Intent gathered around him, and in that instant, it felt as if he was the personification of the spear itself. He was the spear, and the spear was him; there was no distinction between the two.

"T-this... This is the realm of SpearMan Union?" Ying Qin's body stiffened as his eyes narrowed in astonishment.

Legend had it that if one were to reach a certain level in the comprehension of Spear Heart, they would be able to become the spear themselves.

Even without a spear in hand, they could wield their body like a spear through the manifestation of their Spear Intent and challenge anyone who stood in their way!

But even Senior Xue Zhenyang had yet to reach such a realm. How did the man before him achieve such heights?

However, in the midst of a duel, he didn't have the luxury of entertaining any miscellaneous thoughts. Zhang Xuan's manifestation of a spear was already right before him. The other party's fingertip had manifested into the edge of the spear, and with a sharp glint, it clashed with the tip of his spear.

Hong long!

An immense force crushed down on Ying Qin as he felt an overpowering Spear Intent rushing through his body, shattering his defense in an instant.

Pu!

Fresh blood spurted frenziedly from his mouth as his figure was sent flying into the air, retreating at a rapid pace.

Padah!

After flying several dozen meters, he crashed heavily onto the ground. A moment later, the tip of his spear was plunged into the ground some distance away from him.

Pu!

Yet another mouthful of crimson blood spewed from his mouth.

"I've lost..."

Looking at the nonchalant Zhang Xuan on the dueling platform, he clenched his fists tightly in agitation.

He had never thought that even when he had exerted the full extent of his strength, he would still be defeated by a single finger from the other party.

Such strength was already comparable to Senior Xue Zhenyang, the leader of the True Helios Faction.

Just as Ying Qin was wallowing in the sorrow of his defeat, Zhang Xuan's calm voice was suddenly heard.

"Do you know the reason for your loss?"

Ying Qin struggled his feet and said, "I know that I have lost. I will back out of the True Helios Faction to become Xuanxuan Faction's gatekeeper. You need not mock me any further about this matter..."

A person who lived with the spear had a backbone just like the spear.

Since they had agreed on it beforehand, he would keep his end of bet and become the gatekeeper of Xuanxuan Faction. However, he wouldn't allow himself to be humiliated any further.

"Mock?" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"I am only telling you to set your priorities straight. What you should be pursuing is the Way of the Spear, not the spear in your hand!"

"What do you mean?" Ying Qin was slightly taken aback by Zhang Xuan's words.

"Spearmanship is both an artform and a capability. It shouldn't just be what you do with a spear but what you feel with your heart as well."

With his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan turned to Ying Qin with a profound gaze in his eyes and said, "Just like when you were struck by my feather duster in close quarters, if only you had let go of the spear in your hand, what you could have gained would have been a brand-new world. But... it's a pity that you weren't able to do so.

"That's the reason you lost."

"I..." Ying Qin was stunned.

Indeed. When the other party was holding onto his spear and lashing him with a feather duster, he could have let go of his spear. Even if he was barehanded, he would still be able to fight. Even if he couldn't win, he would still be able to flee. At the very least, he wouldn't have been struck so horrendously as he had been back then.

"Afterwards, when I fought you with the feather duster spear, it was indeed a wise move on your part to close the distance between us. However, you neglected the fact that spearmanship doesn't simply lie in the spear. In a true spear art, the man is in the spear, and the spear is in the man as well! That's the reason you were caught off guard when I let go of my spear and attacked you directly," Zhang Xuan continued.

"I..." Ying Qin's body froze in shock.

The other party was right.

Training with the spear, he had already viewed the spear as a part of him. This was the reason he couldn't bring himself to let it go earlier in the battle.

Instinctively, he thought that he would be unable to fight once he released his spear.

"If you aren't able to let go, how can you comprehend the quintessence of the spear and grasp profound spear arts?" Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

"Let go? Quintessence?" Ying Qin muttered these words in a daze.

Ever since he had started learning the spear, he had thought of his weapon as a part of him, just like his limbs and eyes.

How could a human simply let go of their limbs and eyes so easily?

But in the previous battle, Zhang Xuan had given him an

impactful lesson. Sometimes, one had to let go.

Letting go could open up a whole world before one, bringing one release and freedom. Perhaps, one might even notice something one had never noticed before.

Seeing that Ying Qin was starting to understand what he was saying, Zhang Xuan continued, "Spear in the heart, and heart in the spear—that's what spearmanship truly is. The thing you hold in your hand is nothing more than a tool!"

"The heart in the spear is the true spear?" Ying Qin ruminated over those words with his eyes closed. A moment later, exhaling a mouthful of turbid gas, he opened his eyes once more, and the confusion in his eyes had given way to clarity.

Putong!

Kneeling on the floor, Ying Qin lowered his head in respect.

"Thank you for your guidance! I beseech Zhang shi to take me as your student and impart your spearmanship to me!"

Chapter 786: Xue Zhenyang's Determination

"Stand up! As long as you work diligently for the Xuanxuan Faction, I will guide you in your spearmanship!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

The Xuanxuan Faction had just been established, and considering it was a faction consisting solely of freshmen, it was in dire need of credible fighting power. However, Zhang Xuan didn't have the time to protect its members every time something happened, so he needed to bring in sufficiently powerful cultivators to ward off troublemakers.

Considering that these three were geniuses of the Grade-4 students, they were indeed the most suitable candidates.

This was also the reason Zhang Xuan had provoked them into agreeing to the bet of becoming the gatekeepers of Xuanxuan Faction.

He wasn't intentionally trying to humiliate them. He was hoping that through their presence, the troublemakers would have to stop and think for themselves whether they could really afford to provoke the Xuanxuan Faction or not.

Ying Qin stood up and said, "Alright. The three of us will back out of the True Helios Faction to join Xuanxuan Faction!"

At this moment, he wasn't just awed by the other party's fighting prowess but his character as well.

Even in a duel, the latter intentionally used a feather duster against him just to teach him that the foundation of spearmanship didn't lay in the weapon itself.

This comprehension hadn't led to an increase in his fighting prowess yet, but it did open up a brand-new world before him. Now that he knew the general direction in which he should

advance, as long as he built on it, he would surely be able to climb to great heights.

"Un!" Zhang Xuan nodded before turning his gaze back to the crowd.

"Faction leader, faction leader!"

"Faction leader, faction leader!"

...

Suddenly, someone amidst the crowd began shouting 'faction leader!', and before long, more and more people joined in the chant, and it grew louder and louder. Eventually, everyone was shouting vehemently as they stared at the young man on the dueling platform with deep excitement and admiration gleaming from their eyes.

If they had still harbored doubts as to whether it was truly the correct decision for them to follow Zhang Shi previously, at this very moment, they knew that they had made the right decision.

He was able to easily defeat the geniuses of the Martial Arts School, the top fighters of the True Helios Faction. As long as he was around, what else did they have to fear?

This is our faction leader!

The pillar of support for us freshmen. As long as he is around, we have nothing to fear!

Feeling the earnest emotions from the crowd, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel a little moved as well. At this moment, Ruohuan gongzi stepped onto the stage and raised his hand.

The chanting immediately quietened down.

"In the Master Teacher Academy, every batch of freshmen faces the oppression of the seniors. This is to beat the arrogance and conceit out of them, teaching them that there is always a higher mountain, a world beyond what they see! This should have been a

good tradition to uphold within the academy, but... as time passed, this tradition nurtured a sense of superiority within them, and they got more and more overboard in their actions, turning the culture of humility into a toxic cesspool!" Ruohuan gongzi's voice was heard clearly throughout the crowd.

"They forced us into purchasing their products at excessively inflated pricing. They forced us to join their factions and become tools for them to earn their fortunes and Academic Credits. And if we refused, they would use their connections to deprive us of crucial resources needed to survive in the academy! Are we freshmen supposed to sit idly and allow them to oppress us like that?

"We can't!

"We can't, and we won't! We won't allow them to oppress us like that! We won't allow them to turn us into their money-earning slaves! We won't allow our dignity to be trampled beneath their feet! We are master teachers. We are the leaders who will guide humanity to higher grounds, not pitiful beings who can be bullied by anyone!

"We might be weak individually, but even oceans are made of tiny droplets of water. If we can gather our strength together, we will find the might to stand against them! Thus, we must unite together as one!

"On this note, I nominate Zhang shi to be our leader! In order to allow many of us to enroll in the academy, he willingly gave away his own points in the entrance examination. So that we wouldn't be taken advantage of by the seniors, he compiled his own version of the Teacher Information Documentation and distributed it for free. To uphold the dignity of us freshmen, he stood up and defeated the Grade-4 students who came to oppress us, convincing them to lend a hand to our cause!

"His selfless character is a role model for all of us! If such a man is

going to be our leader, I am willing to join the Xuanxuan Faction and listen to his commands!

"What about the rest of you?"

Ruohuan gongzi's gaze fell on the crowd as his voice echoed resoundingly, "Are you willing to stand up as well?"

"We are willing to join the cause!"

"We will join the Xuanxuan Faction!"

...

With thirty thousand freshmen shouting simultaneously, it seemed as if the buildings in the area would collapse due to the sheer volume.

"Good! Since everyone is agreeable, our Xuanxuan Faction shall be officially established today, and Zhang shi will be our leader!" Ruohuan gongzi roared.

Even though most knew of the existence of the Xuanxuan Faction due to Ruohuan gongzi's attempt to gather members, its formation had yet to be officially announced. As such, making use of this opportunity when everyone was gathered together, he decided to announce its establishment. From this moment onward, the largest student faction in the academy was no longer the True Helios Faction nor the Bewitching Devil Faction but the Xuanxuan Faction!

The faction established by Zhang Xuan, a freshman who had barely arrived in the academy for less than five days.

"Xuanxuan Faction! Xuanxuan Faction!"

"Xuanxuan Faction! Xuanxuan Faction!"

...

Deafening chanting sounded from the excited crowd.

Even if a student were to join a senior's faction, while they would

be protected from the oppression from other student factions, they would still face oppression from the seniors in the same faction. The only way for them to escape that altogether was to establish their faction!

Furthermore, given Zhang Shi's noble character, they were more than willing to obey his commands as well!

Thus, the crowd agreed to join the Xuanxuan Faction without any hesitation.

"Since everyone is agreeable, allow me to invite our faction leader up to say a word or two!" Interjecting in the chanting, Ruohuan gongzi turned to Zhang Xuan and gestured him forward.

"Me?" Zhang Xuan was caught off guard by that remark. But facing the expectant gazes of thirty thousand freshmen, he had no choice but to step forward. "There's only one thing I have to say. We might be freshmen, but we aren't inferior to the seniors. What the seniors can do, we can accomplish as well! Only through standing on our own two feet will others acknowledge our strength. If we don't even respect ourselves, who will respect us? Thus, I will warn the members of the Xuanxuan Faction against provoking others, but if anyone comes to provoke us, we shall not back down!"

"Well said!"

"We will let them know our prowess!"

A wave of cheering swept across the crowd.

It had only been five days since they'd enrolled at the academy, but many of those present had already suffered great grievances from the oppression of the seniors. Thus, those words touched the depths of their hearts, leaving them deeply moved.

Seeing this, Ying Qin and the others also felt their blood running wild in passion. It was at this very moment that they couldn't help but think that perhaps... it wasn't a bad decision to join the

Xuanxuan Faction.

Most other student factions operated by forcing others to join their ranks, so their members were united on the surface but divided internally. However, the members of the Xuanxuan Faction were all united in their wills. Perhaps, they might achieve greatness that no other student factions had before!

...

As the student faction was being established, Xue Zhenyang, Long Cangyue, and Dong Xin were also about to arrive at the dormitories of the freshmen.

They had been rushing there ever since leaving Hu Yaoyao's residence, but due to the significant distance between both places, it had taken them quite a while.

"Faction leader!"

Before long, row after row of towering buildings appeared in their sights. They were just about to sneak in under the cover of the night to see how Ying Qin was doing teaching the freshmen a lesson when they suddenly saw a figure rushing toward them before stopping right before them.

"How is Ying Qin doing?" Xue Zhenyang asked.

The other party was the subordinate whom he sent to scout the situation.

"This..." The figure hesitated for a moment before replying, "Ying Qin, Yuan Gang, and Bai Mian... have been defeated by Zhang Shi, and as per their bet, they have left the True Helios Faction to join the Xuanxuan Faction!"

"Defeated? Left the... True Helios Faction?" Xue Zhenyang was flabbergasted.

Before coming over, he had declared confidently that there would be no problems given that he had sent Ying Qin over. Never

had he imagined that such a situation would happen instead!

"Yes!" The figure nodded.

"What happened? Putting aside Yuan Gang and Bai Mian, Ying Qin received my personal guidance! How could he have lost?" Xue Zhenyang was unable to believe his ears.

Yuan Gang and Bai Mian might have still been a little lacking, but Ying Qin was one of the top fighters among the Grade-4 students! The other party had followed him for many years, and he had imparted his spear art to him unreservedly... How could he have lost to the freshmen who had just enrolled into the academy?

Dong Xin and Long Cangyue were also dumbfounded by the situation before them.

Ying Qin might not have been a member of their factions, but as one of the most capable members of the True Helios Faction, they were acquainted with him as well. An Ethereal Treading realm expert, 5-star high-tier master teacher, challenged the freshmen to a duel of battle techniques... but lost?

Were their ears playing tricks on them?

"I recorded the scene of the duel. You will understand once you take a look..." Knowing that it was hard to convince them of the matter, the figure flicked his wrist, took out a Record Crystal, and passed it over.

Xue Zhenyang hurriedly took it and infused his zhenqi into it. A few moments later, the scene of the duel appeared before everyone's eyes.

"The freshmen actually managed to defeat Bai Mian and Yuan Gang easily after receiving his guidance?"

"With a feather duster, he was able to beat Ying Qin into submission?"

...

Upon seeing the content of the Record Crystal, the trio was stunned.

To allow to a freshman to defeat a Grade-4 student after a short moment of guidance... Such a feat was way beyond them!

"Even though he was only using a feather duster, he still managed to subdue Ying Qin by exploiting the flaws in his spear art. This eye of discernment... just how deep an understanding of spearmanship must one possess to be able to do so?" Xue Zhenyang muttered hoarsely as his body trembled uncontrollably.

As a master of the spear, he could tell the prowess of Ying Qin's attacks. Even he would be forced to dodge when facing them!

Yet, not only did Ying Qin's opponent manage to overcome his spear art, he even did so casually by catching hold of his spear using his fingers, as if it was as simple as picking up a rock at the side of the road...

To be able to do this so leisurely, this could only mean that he had seen through the main flaws of Ying Qin's spear art and used them against him.

How frightening must his eye of discernment be?

"It is no wonder Hu Yaoyao ended up becoming his apprentice. His understanding of the spear has reached an unfathomable level... Zhenyang, if you were to fight with him, would you be able to defeat him?" asked Dong Xin, turning to Xue Zhenyang.

"I..." Xue Zhenyang clenched his fists tightly as hesitation flashed across his eyes for a moment. However, his eyes swiftly grew steadfast once more as he said, "I might be unable to defeat him now, but... as long as I am able to reach the tenth dan of the Fallen Leaf Spear, it won't be hard for me to defeat him!"

As the leader of the True Helios Faction, a celebrated genius of the Martial Arts School, how could he falter that easily before an opponent?

"If I recall correctly, you reached 9-dan three years ago. If it was that easy to reach 10-dan, you wouldn't have been stuck for so long!" Dong Xin shook her head, thinking that it was unlikely for Xue Zhenyang to succeed.

"Don't worry, I have already comprehended the essence of the tenth dan. All I am lacking now is an impetus for me to make the breakthrough!"

Back then, in order to overcome his bottleneck, Spear Emperor Lu Xinqing had wandered through the streets to experience the world of the ordinary mortals, and from there, he created the 10 Dans of the Fallen Leaf Spear.

After a moment of hesitation, an unwavering determination appeared in Xue Zhenyang's eyes as he declared, "Tomorrow, I shall leave the academy and wander the world to comprehend the various intricacies of life in order to find the inspiration to achieve the breakthrough to 10-dan. I will not return to the academy until I manage to achieve the breakthrough!"

Chapter 787: Wei Changfeng's Daughter

The establishment of a student faction was not an easy task. There were all kinds of administrative tasks to be done, such as deciding the organization structure, the rules of the faction, and the registration of the members. By the time they were done, it was already nearing dawn.

As a faction established by freshmen, the Xuanxuan Faction had no membership fee. However, it did have a strict organizational system that all members had to adhere to. This was necessary to bring sufficient resources into the faction for its operations.

Of course, such important decisions couldn't be decided overnight, and they were still under discussion.

Zhang Xuan couldn't be bothered with such matters, so he left it up to Ruohuan gongzi, Luo Xuan, and the others, and returned straight to his residence in the Elite Sector.

However, before he could even take a rest, he suddenly heard knockings on his door. One of the seniors in charge of managing the Elite Sector stood at the door.

"Zhang shi, you have a visitor!"

Zhang Xuan glanced behind the senior and saw a fatty, who stepped forward and greeted, "Young Master!"

"Thank you, senior." Seeing that it was Sun Qiang, Zhang Xuan first thanked the senior before pulling Sun Qiang into the residence.

"What happened?"

It had just been a few days ago that he had visited Sun Qiang and the others at the residence. For Sun Qiang to come looking for him so suddenly, could it be that something bad had happened?

"It's Wei Changfeng. After making arrangements for the Spirit

Emporium, he visited the residence seeking Young Master," Sun Qiang replied.

"He is looking for me? Didn't I tell him to follow your instructions? Is he acting defiant?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Wei Changfeng had become his subordinate after he had wreaked havoc in the Spirit Emporium. However, as he had to return to the Master Teacher Academy, he had instructed Wei Changfeng to obey Sun Qiang's commands instead. Could it be that he was refusing to listen to Sun Qiang?

"That's not it. He... insisted on meeting young master. Left with no choice, I could only come over to find you," Sun Qiang replied.

It wasn't easy to gain access to the Master Teacher Academy. Even he had to go through quite a bit of effort before he could reach Zhang Xuan's residence.

"He insisted on meeting me?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"Yes. I asked him what's wrong, but he refused to speak a word. He said that he would only speak before you, so I had no other choice but to come here," Sun Qiang said with a bitter smile.

"This... Alright then, I'll meet him."

It was unlikely for a Saint realm expert like Wei Changfeng to go all the way to seek him for some minor issue. Since he had made such a request, it must be an urgent matter. Thus, Zhang Xuan swiftly left the academy with Sun Qiang.

Soon, they arrived at the residence where Sun Qiang and the others were currently living.

"Young Master!" Wei Changfeng immediately rushed up upon seeing Zhang Xuan's figure.

It had only been a few days since they'd parted, but Wei Changfeng looked as if he had aged several years. His eyes were bloodshot, and it seemed as if he had undergone some kind of

turmoil.

"This... what happened?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

As a Saint realm expert, Wei Changfeng could easily live for a thousand years. As long as he didn't do anything that would sap his life force, it was impossible for him to age so quickly!

Furthermore, taking his lifespan into consideration, the ageing of several years in his appearance would translate to a loss of several decades of his lifespan.

Putong!

Wei Changfeng's knees fell to the ground, and he pleaded, "Young Master, please save my daughter. She's... reaching her limit!"

"Hmm?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

Through the Library of Heaven's Path, he had learned that the reason Wei Changfeng had established the Spirit Emporium was to gather as many as artifacts as possible to feed their spirit to his daughter to sustain her life.

Considering the number of artifacts that Wei Changfeng had gathered, it should have been sufficient for his daughter to hold on for several decades as long as nothing severe occurred. It was also due to this that Zhang Xuan was in no hurry to save his daughter.

Given all that, why did his daughter suddenly fall into a critical state after just a few days?

"I have no idea either. She was still fine initially, but two days ago, her state suddenly worsened. I tried feeding her the spirit of the artifacts, but it was completely ineffective. Young Master, please save my daughter!" Wei Changfeng pleaded desperately with reddened eyes.

For so many years, he had done everything he could to sustain his daughter's life. If the latter were to really succumb to her illness, he wouldn't have the will to live on either.

His young master had been able to see through his situation with a glance, and considering the extraordinary means he had displayed back in the Spirit Emporium as well, perhaps... he might really be able to save his daughter.

This was the last hope that he had.

"Bring me to her!"

The only way for Zhang Xuan to ascertain his daughter's current condition was by meeting her personally.

"I have brought her over. She's currently in my room..." Wei Changfeng hurriedly pointed.

Fearing that his daughter might not last that long, he decided to bring his daughter over as well.

"Good!" Zhang Xuan nodded as he hurried into the room.

The residence which Sun Qiang had found only had eight rooms in total, and all of them were only around ten square meters large. Furthermore, due to the bad positioning of the residence, the rooms were rather dark even in the day.

By the corner of the room was a wooden bed, and lying on it was an extremely thin young lady who seemed to be around fifteen years old or so. Her face was peculiarly pale, and her black hair had a slight yellowish tinge to it. In a coma, her eyes were tightly shut.

"Her illness is really severe!" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Even breathing seemed to be difficult for the young lady before him. Through his Eye of Insight, he could see that the other party's bodily function had already declined fatally, and there was not a single healthy meridian in her body. It felt as if she could just breathe her last at any moment.

It was no wonder Wei Changfeng was panicking. His daughter was indeed already on the verge of death. If she wasn't treated soon, it was doubtful whether she could even last until nightfall.

"Until two days ago, she was still able to maintain her consciousness and converse with me. Even though there were times when her illness would act up, she would be fine once she consumed the spirit of the artifacts... But two days ago, the spirit of the artifacts became completely ineffective in curbing her illness. As a result, she fell into a coma and hasn't woken up since then," Wei Changfeng swiftly explained the symptoms anxiously.

"I see." Zhang Xuan nodded as he assessed the young lady carefully, but eventually, he could only shake his head helplessly.

His current understanding of the Way of Medicine was still only at 4-star. Due to his limited knowledge, even with the Eye of Insight, he was still unable to precisely identify the root of the problem plaguing the young lady.

Thus, without any hesitation, his hand reached forward to read the young lady's pulse.

The young lady's skin felt chilling to the touch, as if an ice cube.

After which, Zhang Xuan muttered inaudibly, "Flaws!"

Weng!

A book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

Just like artifacts, Zhang Xuan could compile a book on an unconscious living being in the Library of Heaven's Path by coming into contact with them as well.

Zhang Xuan hurriedly flipped the book open.

Wei Ruyan, a citizen of Qingyuan City, possessing the Innate Poison Body...

The content of the book immediately surfaced in Zhang Xuan's mind as though it was imprinted on it.

Innate Poison Body? This lass possesses the Innate Poison Body? Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

Unique constitutions were extremely rare on the Master Teacher

Continent. In his entire journey, the only people he had met with unique constitutions were Yuan Tao and Zhao Ya. To think that this unconscious young lady would possess a unique constitution as well!

Innate Poison Body is an ideal constitution for cultivating the ways of the poison master. However, in her current state... it is questionable whether she will be able to live or not! Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Unique constitutions were formidable, but until they were awakened, the possessor of the unique constitution would be nothing more than an ordinary human.

Clearly, this young lady hadn't awakened her unique constitution.

Back when Zhang Xuan was in the Red Lotus Ridge Poison Hall, he once read several books regarding the Innate Poison Body, but the details were extremely vague. As a result, he had no idea how the Innate Poison Body could be activated, and what would happen once it was activated.

In any case, the urgent matter was the illness she was suffering from, so Zhang Xuan continued reading.

... She has once suffered an attack from a Saint realm expert while she was still in her mother's womb, resulting in the Deficiency of Spirit, Soul, and Blood. Flaws: ...

Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up. Deficiency of Spirit, Soul, and Blood?

Just as the name suggested, the Deficiency of Spirit, Soul, and Blood meant that one's spirit, soul, and blood were impaired compared to those of an ordinary human. Often, this was a result of a problem in the development of the fetus, especially the lack of nutrients.

It would be difficult for a person suffering from such an illness to

survive due to their spirit, soul, and blood being too weak to sustain their core bodily functions. In fact, more often than not, a fetus suffering from such an illness wouldn't even survive until childbirth.

Yet, not only did the young lady succeeded in coming to this world alive, she even managed to live to such an age... This was truly a miracle in itself.

"Under normal circumstances, it would have been difficult for Ruyan to be born given her condition. However, my wife expended all of her vitality to protect Ruyan, giving her the strength to be born into this world. In the process, however, my wife... lost her life," Wei Changfeng explained, seemingly noticing Zhang Xuan's thoughts.

His face was nonchalant, and his voice was steady, but the sorrow deep within his eyes couldn't be concealed.

"Ruyan has inherited my wife's life and will. Even at the cost of my life, I can't allow anything to happen to her!"

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nodded earnestly to reassure him that he would try his best.

He could understand where Wei Changfeng was coming from.

His wife had given her life to protect their daughter and bring her into this world. If he couldn't even protect their daughter after all that, how could he face his wife in the netherworld?

Over the years, regardless of how heavy a price he had to pay, as long as there was a ray of hope for his daughter, he would clutch at it desperately.

"Young Master, is there still hope for Ruyan?" Wei Changfeng asked with worry reflected in his eyes.

"Her bodily functions have nearly come to a complete halt. I'm afraid that it will be extremely difficult to save her." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

After reading Wei Ruyan's book, he realized that this matter was extremely problematic.

Over the years, this matter had evolved beyond a simple Deficiency of Spirit, Soul, and Blood problem. In order to sustain Wei Ruyan's life, she had been consuming a lot of nourishing items, but her body was simply too weak to take all that nourishment. As a result, her bodily functions ended up being destroyed by the excessive energy in her body instead.

On top of that, with her soul slowly growing weaker with time, she could be said to already have one foot in the grave.

It was no wonder even 6-star pinnacle physicians were helpless before her problem. Even for Zhang Xuan, despite having traced down the very source of her affliction, he was still at a complete loss, having no idea where he was supposed to start.

Hearing that the young master didn't say that it was entirely impossible, Wei Ruyan immediately pleaded. "Young Master, I ask of you to save Ruyan. As long as Ruyan recovers, I am willing to serve you for my entire life!"

"Since you have sworn loyalty to me, I will definitely do whatever I can for your daughter. However, the affliction plaguing your daughter is a tricky one to deal with. Not only is your daughter's body in a weakened state, her soul is also far too feeble at the moment. To treat her, we must first find a way to allow her to regain her consciousness. However, to do so, we must strengthen her body first..." Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in frustration.

The reason Wei Ruyan was in a coma was due to her body being too weak to harness her soul. To make an analogy, her body was like a gunny sack while her soul was like water, resulting in her soul gradually weakening over time. If her soul weakened beyond a certain point, her consciousness would eventually fade altogether.

But... it was impossible to treat her physical body without rousing her consciousness.

It was possible to nourish her body through medicinal herbs, but its effectiveness would be severely limited without her will tenaciously driving her body to complement the treatment.

This resulted in a paradox. To regain consciousness, she would require a sufficiently strong body to harness her soul. But to nourish her body to become sufficiently strong, she had to regain consciousness first... Such was the difficult situation Wei Ruyan was facing.

Even Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel his head aching at the situation before him.

"What do we do?" Wei Changfeng asked anxiously.

Having come into contact with medicinal herbs and treatment methods on a daily basis in order to treat his daughter, even though he had never taken the physician examination, his comprehension of the Way of Medicine in this specific field could be said to be on par with most 5-star or even 6-star physicians.

Even without the young master saying anything, he knew very well the condition his daughter was in.

Could it be that the young master was helpless before this situation as well?

Was he doomed to watch as his daughter withered before his eyes?

Zhang Xuan contemplated for a moment before replying, "Calm down, I have a way to stabilize her condition for the time being. However, it is unlikely to work for long. In order to treat her once and for all, we have to first find a medicinal herb capable of nurturing the soul. As long as I can find a way to peg her soul to such a medicinal herb to nurture it, I should be able to rouse her consciousness, and the rest will be easier to deal with!"

Chapter 788: Metastasis of the Innate Fetal Poison

Even 7-star physicians would have been helpless in such a situation, but Zhang Xuan was different.

Possessing the capability of a soul oracle, if it were to come down to it, he could even draw the other party's soul out to nourish it directly before placing it back into her body.

However, given Wei Ruyan's current feeble body, if he were to draw her soul out, there was a chance that she might succumb to her frailty and die. Thus, that could only serve as his final resort.

"Medicinal herb? What medicinal herb do you need?" Wei Changfeng asked anxiously. "Give me the name, and I'll definitely find it no matter how much it takes!"

"I don't have a specific name to give you, but the medicinal herb must at least reach Saint tier and possess the ability to nurture souls. Furthermore, the herb must be alive... On top of that, I will need a Grand Intermittence Pill!" Zhang Xuan said.

"A living Saint herb? And a Grand Intermittence Pill, the g-grade-7 pill?" Wei Changfeng's face paled.

If it had been anything else, given his strength as a Saint realm expert and his influence as the head of the Spirit Emporium, it wouldn't have been too difficult for him to find them as long as he were to devote his resources into it. But those two items... that would be difficult.

This was no longer a problem of whether he had the connections to obtain them or not, but that it was very possible that these items might not even exist in the entire Hongyuan City!

If it was on some other occasion, he might still have been able to head to a higher tier empire to search for those items. However, Wei Ruyan's current condition didn't permit him the luxury of

time!

"Only a living Saint herb possesses sufficient vitality to nurture her feeble soul. As for the Grand Intermittent Pill, I believe that you should have heard of it as well. As long as one hasn't hurt one's foundation, one will be able to recover from even the most severe of injuries easily by consuming this pill, and this includes severed limbs as well! This pill is also extremely effective in tackling physical frailty," Zhang Xuan explained.

The Grand Intermittent Pill harnessed the ability to stimulate the vitality within a human body, allowing even one's severed limbs to regrow.

Considering that Wei Ruyan's bodily functions had nearly come to a complete halt, only a pill of such a level could alleviate her condition.

Any pill weaker than that was likely to be completely ineffective on her.

"I understand... It might still be able to find a living Saint herb in Hongyuan City, but where am I to search for a grade-7 pill?" Wei Changfeng clenched his fists tightly in distress.

As rare as Saint herbs were, there were still some who cultivated them in Hongyuan City. As long as one could offer them a satisfying price, it wasn't too difficult to obtain it.

But... it was nearly impossible to find a grade-7 pill here.

"Hmm." Zhang Xuan also frowned.

Even the most capable of apothecaries in Hongyuan City were at 6-star pinnacle, and it was impossible for them to forge grade-7 pills. Not to mention, the Grand Intermittent Pill was one of the more advanced pills amongst grade-7 pills.

"For the time being, let me see if I can find some other way to strengthen her body." Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan turned his sight back to Wei Ruyan.

At this moment, Zhang Xuan was considering trying the Heaven's Path zhenqi to nourish Wei Ruyan's body.

The Heaven's Path zhenqi possessed the ability to allow one to recover from one's injuries swiftly. While Zhang Xuan had never tried to see if it was capable of stimulating the regrowth of severed limbs, there was no doubt regarding its ability to heal most wounds.

If it could be used as a substitution for the Grand Intermittence Pill, they could be spared from the effort of having to find a grade-7 pill.

Thus, placing his wrist on Wei Ruyan's wrist, he sent a surge of Heaven's Path zhenqi into her body.

Her meridians are completely blocked?

Zhang Xuan had thought that he would be able to send his Heaven's Path zhenqi throughout Wei Ruyan's body to trigger her vitality, but who could have known that he would meet with a blockade shortly after entry?

To his astonishment, the meridians in her body were like sealed tunnels, unconnected to one another.

Helpless, Zhang Xuan retracted his finger.

This is probably a result of the attack from the Saint realm expert she suffered back when she was still a fetus. As a self-protective mechanism, her body automatically sealed her meridians to limit the damage. Furthermore, as she has been in this condition for too long, it would be dangerous to attempt to force her meridians open, especially while she's unconscious...

Zhang Xuan swiftly got a rough grasp regarding the situation.

Maybe I should try this!

Despite his initial failure, Zhang Xuan didn't despair. He flicked his wrist and took out a box of silver needles.

Hu!

With a light shake of his hand, the silver needles fell on the various acupoints throughout Wei Ruyan's body, and using them as a medium, Zhang Xuan sent surges of his Heaven's Path zhenqi into her body.

"Good, it worked!"

As the Heaven's Path zhenqi seeped into Wei Ruyan's body, her ghastly pale face finally began to regain a red glow.

"It worked..." Wei Changfeng's body trembled in agitation.

Seeing that it was effective, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He continued to infuse his zhenqi into the other party's body through the silver needles.

However, just as Zhang Xuan was about to circulate his Heaven's Path zhenqi throughout Wei Ruyan's body to nourish it, he suddenly noticed something, and his eyebrows shot up in alarm.

"No, something's wrong!"

He immediately rushed to retract the silver needles, but before he could do so, the face of the young lady before him suddenly turned pale once more, and her body abruptly convulsed intensely.

"Damn it!"

Zhang Xuan swiftly retracted all of the silver needles from Wei Ruyan's body as fast as he could.

However, it was already too late. As if struck by lethal poison, white foam seeped out from the edges of the young lady's mouth, and after a slight moment of trembling, her body fell deadly still.

"D-dead?" Wei Changfeng quickly rushed forward to check the condition of his daughter, and upon realizing that there was no pulse, his eyes immediately turned crimson in fury.

He had thought that the young master might be able to save his daughter, and clutching this final straw of hope, he had rushed

over to seek his help. Who could have known that the latter would actually treat his daughter to her death!

In that instant, the final spark of hope in his heart faded, and madness overtook his rationality.

"This..." Zhang Xuan was also in a frenzy by the situation before him.

The Heaven's Path zhenqi had never failed him before. Why would something crop up this time around, causing Wei Ruyan to lose her life?

"It must be the effects of her Innate Poison Body..." Zhang Xuan's face turned livid as realization struck him.

The other party's Innate Poison Body seemed to have clashed with his Heaven's Path zhenqi, resulting in a backlash.

Considering the incredibly feeble state that Wei Ruyan was already in, how could she possibly withstand the impact of the backlash? Due to the heavy toll on her body, she breathed her last.

I promised Wei Changfeng that I'll treat his daughter, but such an unfortunate mishap happened instead... Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

Even though Wei Changfeng wouldn't be able to do anything to Zhang Xuan with his soul being held hostage, it was a fact that Zhang Xuan had promised to treat his daughter.

Just a moment ago his daughter had still been breathing, albeit on the verge of death. Yet, in the midst of his treatment, his daughter ended up losing her life.

It might have been an unfortunate accident, but there was no way anyone could accept this easily, especially not Wei Changfeng, who had devoted his life to saving his daughter.

I must save her!

Whether it was for Wei Changfeng, his own reputation, or Wei

Ruyan herself, Zhang Xuan couldn't allow the young lady to die just like that. Thus, he placed his fingers on the other party's pulse once more and compiled a new book on her condition.

In the blink of an eye, he browsed through the entire book.

Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan instructed, "Little Feng, leave the room for a moment!"

"Leave the room?" Wei Changfeng asked with an awful look on his face.

"That's right. She isn't completely dead yet. She has just fallen into a deeper coma due to the backlash from the collision of energies. I need to use my secret art to save her, so I need you to leave for a moment." Zhang Xuan waved his hands, urging him to leave quickly.

"This..." Wei Changfeng's face turned incredibly ugly after hearing those words.

Her heart has stopped, and her body was beginning to stiffen. Yet, you are calling this a coma?

Who do you think you are fooling?

"Hurry up! If you don't want to see her dead, get out of the room this very instant!" Zhang Xuan roared furiously.

"Alright then." Seeing the young master fly into a rage, even though Wei Changfeng was still feeling deeply displeased on the inside, he still walked out of the room and closed the doors.

In the end, this was the final sliver of hope he had left. He could only pray that what Zhang Xuan was saying was true.

After he left, Zhang Xuan exhaled deeply and sat on the ground.

He had used the Library of Heaven's Path to check on Wei Ruyan's condition just a moment ago, and detailed on it was not that Wei Ruyan had fallen into a deeper coma but that... she was really dead!

However, even though she had breathed her last, her soul had yet to leave the confines of her body entirely yet.

While it wasn't incorrect to define a person in such a state as dead, considering how not even a 7-star physician would be able to treat such a condition, Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled one of the techniques that Mo Hunsheng had imparted to him had the effect of guiding a soul back to its body.

Thus... since there was no better solution at hand, he decided to give it a try!

Otherwise, Wei Ruyan truly would be doomed!

This technique is damaging to my soul, but at this moment... I have no other choice!

Since he had decided to save Wei Ruyan, he wouldn't allow anyone or anything, not even the grim reapers, to take her away, even if he had to pay a heavy price for it.

Thus, Zhang Xuan drew his soul out from his glabella.

Floating in the air, he saw Wei Ruyan's soul gradually separating from her body, as if attracted by some inexplicable force of nature.

Seal!

Knowing that it would be impossible to save her once her soul was taken away, Zhang Xuan immediately formed a few hand seals before pushing his palm down on her soul.

Soul Art, Soul Summoning!

This capability had the mystical ability of summoning a soul through a suitable medium.

Huala!

With the suppression from his palm, the soul immediately returned back to her body.

However, just this wasn't enough to reverse her death.

Even though Wei Ruyan's soul had been temporarily secured by Soul Summoning, her death had already created a considerable rift between her body and her soul, making it difficult to fuse them together again.

I have to enter her consciousness!

It was impossible to mend the rift from the outside. Zhang Xuan would have to enter her consciousness, just like how he had saved Lu Chong previously. Thus, without any hesitation, his massive soul seeped right into her consciousness.

In a vast sea of consciousness, a thin and frail-looking young lady was floating in the air a short distance away with her eyes tightly shut, seemingly in a deep sleep.

It was Wei Ruyan's soul.

I will have to strengthen her soul first... There's only one feasible way to do it at the moment, and that is to nurture her soul through mine! Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly together.

Due to the other party's soul being too weak at the moment, it was impossible to fuse it together with her body. Thus, there was a need to strengthen her soul first.

And the best method to do so was to nurture her soul through his!

In essence, this method meant feeding a portion of his soul to the other party.

Even though it was an effective method, it would also severely weaken oneself as well. As such, unless it was for the closest kin, there was no soul oracle who would be willing to resort to this.

To be honest, Zhang Xuan was also a little hesitant to go so far for a person whom he had only met a moment ago.

But ultimately, even though Wei Ruyan had already been in an extremely feeble condition back then and could possibly have died

at any moment, it was a fact that his treatment had led to her death.

Since he had wronged her, it was only right for him to correct it.

Besides, the lengths to which Wei Changfeng had gone for his daughter had also touched him. It would be an unfortunate tragedy if the father and daughter were to be separated by the boundary of life and death.

Tzzzz!

Zhang Xuan's soul reached for Wei Ruyan's finger, and using her arm as a medium, he injected concentrated soul essence into the latter's body so as to nourish her soul.

As his soul essence depleted at a rapid pace, it didn't take too long for Zhang Xuan to feel deep fatigue.

Soul essence to a soul was just like blood to a body. Giving it away to another was extremely damaging to his soul. The fatigue he was feeling at the moment was only a minor side effect; in the very worst-case scenario, his soul could even lose its stability and dissipate.

However, since he had already begun this, it was already too late to back down. Suppressing his fatigue, he continued to pump his soul essence into the other party's soul.

Under the massive influx of soul essence, Wei Ruyan's feeble soul finally began to grow denser.

It is effective...

Upon seeing that his method was working, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. However, just as he was about to continue pumping more soul essence into the other party, a thought suddenly flashed through his mind, and his eyes widened in shock. He immediately activated his Eye of Insight, and his soul began trembling in agitation.

Sh*t, the Innate Fetal Poison... is spreading!

Chapter 789: Poison Soul Constitution

Initially, the Innate Fetal Poison in his soul was wrapped together in a bundle by the corner, making it an inconspicuous existence.

However, with his soul weakening swiftly due to the transfusion of his soul essence, the Innate Fetal Poison began its assault. At this moment, it had already spread to more than half of his entire soul, and its march was still showing no signs of stopping.

I'm done for... Zhang Xuan's face paled in fright.

The Innate Fetal Poison was something even Empyrean Kong shi had been helpless before in his time! If he were to allow it to consume his soul, there was no doubt that he would be immediately poisoned to death. No one would be able to save him!

Even though Zhang Xuan had failed to find what he was looking for at the Terpsichore School, he hadn't panicked too much. He had thought that as long as he were to proceed carefully, he would be fine for the time being.

Yet, in his moment of anxiety, he'd neglected the presence of the Innate Fetal Poison in his soul and transfused his soul essence to another, granting the Innate Fetal Poison an opportunity to strike!

What in the world is this!

I must be the first one in the world to die due to an attempt to save another's life!

On the verge of tears, just as Zhang Xuan was contemplating drawing back the soul essence he had pumped into the other party, he suddenly felt a warm surge of energy flowing back from the young lady's body.

Upon contact with this surge of energy, the Innate Fetal Poison immediately fled in fright, as if having met its nemesis.

This... Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in astonishment.

The Innate Fetal Poison was a high-grade poison which was extremely difficult to deal with. So far, the only thing that Zhang Xuan had found to be effective in suppressing it was the Heaven's Path zhenqi. In order to save his soul, he had tried many methods in hopes of being able to keep the Innate Fetal Poison in check, but none of them worked.

Yet, why was it suddenly retreating so fearfully all of the sudden?

A thought flashed through Zhang Xuan's mind, and he muttered beneath his breath, "Could it be... the Innate Poison Body?"

Through the Library of Heaven's Path, he'd learned that Wei Ruyan possessed the Innate Poison Body, just that she hadn't activated it yet.

Could the Innate Poison Body possess the ability to curb the Innate Fetal Poison as well?

"No, it doesn't seem to be the Innate Poison Body. Could it be the... Poison Soul Constitution?" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in agitation.

The Innate Poison Body granted one an innate resistance to all poison. In fact, the consumption of lethal poison would only further temper one's physical body.

However, such an effect didn't extend to one's soul. If afflicted by a soul poison, it was still possible for a person possessing the Innate Poison Body to be poisoned to death.

Unless... that person possessed the Poison Soul Constitution as well.

The Poison Soul Constitution worked in a manner similar to the Innate Poison Body. It granted one's soul perfect immunity to all poison.

Considering that Wei Ruyan's soul was able to help him suppress

the Innate Fetal Poison plaguing his soul, there was a high chance that she possessed such a constitution.

It's no wonder she's still so feeble despite absorbing the spirit of so many artifacts! Her body has already been extremely frail since birth, and yet she still had to bear the burden from the sheer might of two unique constitutions within her. It is truly a miracle that she has survived to such an age! It sure is hard to say whether she has been blessed or cursed by the heavens... Zhang Xuan exclaimed internally as realization struck him.

Unique constitutions were extremely powerful, but their sheer power created a heavy burden on one's body as well. It sure wasn't easy for Wei Ruyan to come this far with two unique constitutions within her.

I should try it out to see if my deduction is right!

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan began to draw back the soul essence he had pumped into the other party's soul.

Gu gu gu!

As soon as the soul essence he had drawn back came into contact with the Innate Fetal Poison, the latter immediately retreated in horror as if electrified.

Hahaha, this is great! Zhang Xuan laughed joyously to himself.

He had been agonizing over how he could curb the Innate Fetal Poison when the solution to his problem simply fell from the heavens. Excited, Zhang Xuan quickly hastened the flow of his soul essence.

Tzzzz!

As he circulated his soul essence with Wei Ruyan, the Innate Fetal Poison was slowly driven back to the corner where it came from, not daring to make a move at all.

Even though he couldn't get rid of it yet, he was at least able to

suppress it for the time being.

This sure is a blessing in disguise! Only after suppressing the Innate Fetal Poison entirely did Zhang Xuan finally heave a sigh of relief, and excitement gleamed in his eyes.

Nurturing the soul of another was never an easy feat. To allow Wei Ruyan's soul to recover from its feeble state, he would have to expend a significant portion of his soul essence, leaving him in a severely weakened state.

Nevertheless, at this very moment, Zhang Xuan was truly glad that he had made the decision he did. Who could have known that the sacrifice he made for Wei Ruyan would end up saving his life as well?

When his soul essence fused with the latter's soul, it also gained a certain degree of the properties of the Poison Soul Constitution as well. At this current moment, even if someone were to feed him lethal poison capable of dissipating one's soul, he would be completely unaffected by it. On the contrary, his soul might even grow stronger as a result of it.

I'll have to stop here today.

Along with the transfusion of his soul essence, the fatigue Zhang Xuan felt gradually weighed heavier and heavier on him. Eventually, reaching his limit, he had no choice but to extract his soul from the other party's consciousness.

Honestly speaking, Wei Ruyan's soul was simply way too feeble. Even with the nourishment of his soul, he was still unable to awaken her fully in a single try.

Hu!

As Zhang Xuan's soul returned to his physical body, he immediately turned his gaze to assess Wei Ruyan's condition once more.

Even though the latter had yet to awaken, she had regained her

breathing and heartbeat, and there was a healthy red glow on her face as well. At this moment, it felt as if she was only asleep.

For the time being, she shouldn't be in danger.

However, if she wasn't treated soon, it was unlikely that she would be able to survive for too long. Her physical body was simply far too weak.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan shouted, "Alright, come in!"

Jiya!

The anxious Wei Changfeng immediately rushed into the room in a fluster, and after taking a look at his daughter, he heaved a sigh of relief. Following which, he turned to his young master, and upon seeing the latter's pale face, he suddenly felt a pang of guilt.

Seeing the young master's treatment causing his daughter's death had left him so infuriated that he almost wanted to kill him. However, at this very instant, he realized that everything the young master had done was to save his daughter!

For the young master to be severely weakened after the treatment, it was clear how far he had gone for her...

Despite the other party devoting his efforts to saving his daughter, he actually misunderstood his intentions...

"I'm sorry, Young Master..." Wei Changfeng lowered his head apologetically.

"I've said that as long as you remain loyal to me, I will definitely do everything I can to save your daughter!" Zhang Xuan shook his head as he spoke with a powerless voice. "Guard me, I need to recuperate."

Leaving those words behind, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out a jade bottle. Opening it, a round pill fell into his palm, and he consumed it whole.

It was the Miniature Restorative Pill that Wei Ranxue had given

him.

Gugugugu!

The pill dissolved as soon as it came into contact with his mouth, turning into a warm gush of medicinal energy that surged through his body. His soul, which had been severely depleted while trying to nurture Wen Ruyan's, slowly began to heal.

A moment later, he exhaled a mouthful of turbid gas before standing up.

Through the medicinal energy of the pill and his meditation, his soul was able to recover to its original state.

"Young Master!" Wei Changfeng clasped his fist to greet Zhang Xuan.

"Un."

Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to the young lady on the bed once more, and after confirming once more that her status had stabilized, he heaved a sigh of relief. "We will still need the two items which I listed previously. Don't waste your time waiting here, hurry up and find them!"

"Yes!" Wei Changfeng nodded. However, a moment later, he frowned. "I have given it some thought, and I think that there just might be a living saint herb in Hongyuan City. However... I might require Young Master to lead the way!"

"Where is it?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

Wei Changfeng was a Saint realm expert, and yet there was still a place in Hongyuan City which he couldn't access?

"It's in the Master Teacher Academy," Wei Changfeng replied.

"The Master Teacher Academy?" Zhang Xuan was stunned for an instant before realization struck him.

Indeed. Having been able to enter its premises freely as a student, Zhang Xuan had overlooked its tight security. The entire academy

was filled with many experts, and there was no lack of Saint realm cultivators amidst them. Even a person of Wei Changfeng's strength would dare not charge in recklessly.

Thus, he required a student such as Zhang Xuan to bring him in.

"Yes. The vice head of the Physician School, You Xu, is not only a physician but a herbologist as well. He cultivates quite a few precious medicinal herbs in his garden, so if there is anywhere we can procure living saint herb in Hongyuan City, it is from him!" Wei Changfeng said.

Zhang Xuan nodded. "That's good, let's make a move then! The longer we drag it out, the harder it'll be to treat your daughter!"

"Yes!" Wei Changfeng replied.

After the discussion, just as the duo made their way out of the room, they saw Sun Qiang, Wang Ying, and the others standing before them.

They turned to Zhang Xuan as soon as they saw him walking out of the room and greeted him.

"Teacher!"

"Young Master!"

Over the past few days of absence, Wang Ying and the others had made significant progress in their cultivation once again. The aura they exuded felt much more condensed than before.

With everyone gathered in the same area, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but to notice how cramped the residence was once again. Shaking his head, he turned to Sun Qiang and asked, "Have you found a larger residence yet?"

"Reporting to Young Master, I have searched the area, but there are simply no larger residences in the vicinity," Sun Qiang said embarrassedly.

It wasn't that he had been lazing about, but all of the better

residences near the Master Teacher Academy he found had already been purchased by the other students. Up until this point, the best residence that was available that he had found so far was still the one they were living in.

Knowing that Sun Qiang wasn't intentionally slacking off, Zhang Xuan didn't blame him. Instead, he turned to Wang Ying and the others and instructed, "I see. Alright, Wang Ying, Zheng Yang, and Liu Yang, you should help Sun Qiang look around as well. The sooner we find a suitable residence, the sooner we can move. This place is simply far too cramped..."

With another three people on the job, they should be able to find a suitable residence sooner.

In any case, spending all of their time cooped up indoors cultivating wasn't ideal for them either. There should be a balance between work and leisure. It would do them some good to take a stroll outside and enjoy the city.

"Yes!" Wang Ying and the others nodded.

"Let's go!" After delegating several other matters, Zhang Xuan left for the Master Teacher Academy with Wei Changfeng beside him.

Even though he still hadn't received his student token yet, he had the tokens of three of the Ten Great Master Teachers in his possession, so bringing another person into the academy wasn't a problem for him.

After traveling for another hour, they finally arrived at the Physician School.

The Physician School was ranked fifth out of the ten schools of the academy. Nevertheless, due to the nature of their occupation, there was no master teacher in the academy who was willing to offend them.

After all, there was no way anyone could guarantee that they could remain healthy for their entire life. As cultivators, there was

a much higher chance that a day would come when they would require the help of the Physician School than any of the other schools in the academy.

Even before reaching the Tower of Physicians, the building located at the very center of the Physician School, Zhang Xuan could already see a large crowd walking in and out of the area. Astonishingly, it seemed to be even more bustling than the Blacksmith School.

As they were heading over, Zhang Xuan suddenly asked, "The price of saint herbs aren't cheap. Have you prepared the money yet?"

He had no high-tier spirit stones with him at the moment, so there was no way he could afford a saint herb. Besides, Wei Ruyan was Wei Changfeng's daughter, so it was only right for the latter to pay.

"I have prepared some money. It should be enough to afford a saint herb," Wei Changfeng replied.

As the head of the Spirit Emporium, even though most of his artifacts had been swept away by Zhang Xuan, he still had quite a bit of savings left with him.

While saint herbs were expensive, the savings which he had accrued over many years should be sufficient to afford it.

"That's good!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Advancing ahead, an imposing tower soon came into their sight.

Tower of Physicians!

This was the grandest building within the entire Physician School, and the Vice School Head You Xu whom Wei Changfeng spoke of resided here.

Following behind the crowd, Zhang Xuan stepped through the entrance of the tower.

The first floor was a vast hall with countless master teachers walking around the area.

Shelves of precious herbs filled the room, and by the corner stood several physicians to attend to those who required a diagnosis. Most master teachers would choose to pay this place a visit to resolve any existing conditions they had or to purchase recovery herbs before embarking on their mission.

Zhang Xuan scanned the surroundings, but he wasn't sure where Vice School Head You Xu's living quarters were. Thus, he could only head to the reception with Wei Changfeng beside him.

Chapter 790: Ten-leafed Flower

"What do the both of you need?" the receptionist asked with a smile upon seeing Zhang Xuan and Wei Changfeng.

The receptionist was a lady in her early thirties. She wore a tight-fitting physician robe which accentuated her beautiful figure.

Like Luo Qiqi, she was also a 5-star low-tier master teacher, a Grade-2 student. Most likely, she had taken this job in order to earn Academic Credits as well.

"We wish to meet Vice School Head You Xu." Zhang Xuan dived right into the matter at hand.

"You wish to meet Vice School Head You?" The receptionist was slightly taken aback. With a doubtful voice, she asked, "Do you have an appointment with him?"

"We don't!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

The receptionist also shook her head. "I will have to apologize then. Vice School Head You is a busy man, so I can't take you to meet him if you don't have an appointment."

As a vice head of the Physician School, a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, even the nobility of the country would have to make an appointment in advance to meet him. How could a mere student be allowed to meet him as he pleased?

Judging from the other party's young age, he was likely to only be a Grade-1 student. A minor figure like this wouldn't even be qualified to meet the manager of the Tower of Physicians, needless to say a vice school head! Indeed, the ignorant were brazen!

"Then... how can we make an appointment with him?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"I have no idea," the receptionist replied snappishly.

She had already made it clear through her words, but the other

party still continued to pester her. A hint of displeasure flashed across the receptionist's eyes.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan scratched his head, troubled.

He'd thought that the matter could be easily settled—he would meet with Vice School Head You Xu, ask him about the medicinal herb, negotiate the price, and they would be done. But who would have thought that he would be hindered at the very first step?

However, considering the other party's standing as the vice head of the Physician School, this should have been expected. Otherwise, if he were to meet anyone who sought an audience with him, he wouldn't have any time left for himself anymore.

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Xuan said, "Since that's the case, I have something in my possession that I hope you can pass to Vice School Head You in my stead. Perhaps, he might be willing to meet me after see it."

"I apologize, but I am not your courier. If you really wish to meet Vice School Head You, please return only after you have the qualification to speak with him. Now if you will excuse me, I have things to attend to..."

Seeing that the other party was still refusing to give up, the receptionist shook her head in displeasure and rejected him flatly. However, just as she was about to chase him away, he suddenly flicked his wrist, and a token appeared in his hand.

On the surface of the token was a majestic image with rows after rows of buildings inscribed on it. It was a picture of the Master Teacher Academy.

The token of the elders?

Gedeng! The receptionist's words suddenly came to an abrupt halt.

As a Grade-2 student, she was naturally able to recognize the personal tokens of the elders of the academy. How could a

freshman possess such an important item?

In the midst of her shock, the young man flicked his wrist and took out two other identical tokens.

Placing the personal tokens on the receptionist table, Zhang Xuan requested, "I have three tokens here. Can you take a look to see which of them is closer with Vice School Head You and deliver it to him?"

"This..." Astonished, the receptionist flipped over one of the tokens, only to see the words 'Mo Zhu' written on it.

"Mo Zhu? The head of the Beast Tamer School, School Head Mo?" The receptionist shuddered in shock.

With trembling lips, she flipped over the second token, and she nearly blacked out.

Written on the second token was a name as well—Zhao Bingxu.

It was the head of the Blacksmith School, School Head Zhao!

"He possesses both School Head Mo and School Head Zhao's personal tokens?" the young lady uttered in shock as her trembling hand reached for the third token and flipped it.

Wei Ranxue!

It was the head of the Terpsichore School!

The Ten Great Master Teachers were figures who stood at the very top of the academy, existences far beyond her. Despite being a Grade-2 student, she had hardly seen them around in the academy. It was only during the Academy's Annual Celebration and the Annual Tournament that she would get an opportunity to see them from afar.

Yet, the young man before her actually took out three of their personal tokens at once...

The receptionist felt as if she was going to burst into tears.

She had thought that the other party was only a mere freshman, but who could have known that he would have such powerful backing?

If you are so formidable, you should have just headed up to meet Vice School Head You directly. Why did you even bother wasting your breath on me?

While her face had gone pale in shock, the young man before her asked with a doubtful voice, "How is it? Are these tokens useless as well? I knew it, those fellows were indeed bragging... If the tokens won't work, will it be better if I call them over?"

"Cough cough!" The attendant nearly died from shock.

To say that three of the school heads were bragging, and even propose to call them over...

Just who was the young man standing before her?

To think that she had snapped at him just a moment ago...

Her face paled as her body shook uncontrollably. "There's no need for that! The tokens work perfectly fine!"

Fearing that she would earn the ire of the school heads, the receptionist hurriedly pushed the tokens back to Zhang Xuan before walking out from the receptionist desk. "Follow me!"

Regardless of whether the other party meant those words or not, the fact that he could whip out the personal tokens of three of the Ten Great Master Teachers was more than enough to say that he was a figure whom she couldn't afford to offend.

"Thanks." Seeing that the personal tokens had really worked, Zhang Xuan nodded before following behind the receptionist with Wei Changfeng.

Not too long later, they arrived at the entrance of a vast courtyard.

"This is the residence of Vice School Head You!" the receptionist

gestured and said.

Zhang Xuan turned his attention to the residence.

As expected of the residence of the vice head of the Physician School, it was indeed much larger than Hu Yaoyao's residence. Even though he couldn't get a clear view of the formation surrounding the residence, he could still feel the dense spiritual energy drifting in the surroundings.

Dong dong dong!

Stepping forward, the receptionist knocked on the gates.

Jiya!

A middle-aged man opened the gates from the inside.

"Sun laoshi, these two men seek an audience with Vice School Head You," the receptionist hurriedly said.

"Seek an audience with Vice School Head You?" The middle-aged Sun laoshi frowned.

He turned his gaze to Zhang Xuan, and after confirming that he had no idea who he was, he turned his gaze onto Wei Changfeng. The next moment, his eyes lit up. "So, it's the Boss Wei from the Spirit Emporium! I'll report your presence to my teacher this instant!"

As a Saint realm expert and one of the top figures in Hongyuan City, Wei Changfeng was rather well-known in Hongyuan City as well.

Hearing those words, Wei Changfeng nodded.

As Sun laoshi turned around and returned back into the residence, the receptionist nearly fell limply to the ground from horror.

As Wei Changfeng had been standing silently behind Zhang Xuan without saying a word like a subordinate, she had assumed him to be a person unworthy of notice. Never could she have imagined

that he would be the boss of the Spirit Emporium!

To take a Saint realm expert as a subordinate... Just who in the world was the young man before her?

It didn't take long for Sun laoshi to return. He bowed deeply and gestured for them to head into the residence. "This way please!"

"Thank you."

Ignoring the receptionist, who seemed to be on the verge of going bonkers, Zhang Xuan stepped into the residence.

The next moment, the refreshing scent of medicinal herbs filled his nose. Concentrated spiritual energy seemed to linger by his ear like a mini whirlwind, producing a soft whimpering sound.

Consonance of the Spiritual Energy? Zhang Xuan was stunned.

This phenomenon was a result of a consonance produced by accumulating an overwhelming amount of treasures in an area.

Scanning through the courtyard, Zhang Xuan swiftly caught sight of a small medicinal herb garden. That was where the Consonance of the Spiritual Energy was coming from. All kinds of herbs were being cultivated in the garden, creating a beautiful harmony of vibrant colors. It was a pleasure just to look at them.

Broken Yin Grass, Smile Embodiment Flower, Seven Hearts Spearmint... There are so many saint herbs here? Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up in astonishment.

The garden was considerably small, containing only several hundred medicinal herbs. However, every single one of them was a top-grade herb, and one could even see quite a number of saint herbs with just a swift glance.

Hmm? That is... a Ten-leafed Flower? As Zhang Xuan carefully observed them while walking along the garden, his eyes suddenly lit up.

The Ten-leafed Flower was a saint herb as well.

Upon reaching maturity, ten different colored flowers will bloom on the ten leaves of the medicinal herb, and the flowers corresponded to the three hun and seven po of a human's soul. If they could procure this saint herb to nourish Wei Ruyan's soul, Zhang Xuan was confident that he would be able to awaken her within a single week.

At that moment, Wei Changfeng asked him via zhenqi telepathy, "Young Master, will that Ten-leafed Flower do?"

Clearly, he had also caught sight of the same medicinal herb as him.

In order to save his daughter, he had studied a great deal on medicine, granting him in-depth knowledge regarding medicinal herbs.

"Yes, the Ten-leafed Flower can save your daughter's life. However, it'll be preferable to procure one whose flowers have already bloomed so as to maximize the effectiveness of the treatment," Zhang Xuan replied affirmatively.

The Ten-leafed Flower being cultivated in the medicinal herb garden was still quite some time away from blooming. However, it was unlikely that Wei Ruyan would be able to wait so long. Even though the effectiveness of the treatment would be lowered using an immature Ten-leafed Flower, it should still be sufficient to save her life.

Hearing the young master's confirmation, Wei Changfeng heaved a sigh of relief. With his goal lying right before him, he couldn't help but feel agitated within.

At that moment, Sun laoshi suddenly reported with a resounding voice, "Teacher, Boss Wei is here!"

Shifting their gazes, they soon saw an old man applying fertilizer to one of the medicinal herbs with a bent back not too far away.

The old man seemed to be in his sixties or seventies, and he had a

long grayish beard.

The medicinal herb which he was tending to was a crimson flower with clear vein lines on it. The old man carefully dug the soil around the crimson flower and poured a scarlet fluid in before placing the soil back.

Demonic Blood Flower? Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had read this flower on a book before. Even though it was a saint herb, there were very few people who chose to cultivate it.

It wasn't because the flower was inauspicious but that it was simply too difficult to provide for it.

This was because the Demonic Blood Flower required the nourishment of blood to survive!

Just cultivating a single Demonic Blood Flower would potentially require the blood of more than a dozen spirit beasts.

It seems Vice School Head You isn't young anymore...

But even though it was hard to provide for, it had an incredible effect as well. Once matured, consuming it could boost a person's vitality, extending their lifespan.

This was probably the reason Vice School Head You was taking care for it so diligently.

Otherwise, why would a master teacher spend so much effort on cultivating such a medicinal herb?

"Un." Without turning his head over, the old man waved his hands to gesture that he had heard Sun laoshi.

The old man first flattened the ground around the Demonic Blood Flower and washed his hands in a basin in front of him before turning his attention to them.

"I have long heard of Boss Wei's reputation, pleased to meet you," Vice School Head Wei said with a smile.

"I have also long heard of Vice School Head Wei's aptitude in cultivating medicinal herbs, and I must say that I am truly impressed by your medicinal herb garden!" Wei Changfeng clasped his fist.

"I dare not claim any aptitude in it, it is just a hobby of mine. May I know the reason for Boss Wei's sudden visit?" asked Vice School Head You.

As fellow Saint realm experts, even though they had never met before, they had at least heard of each other's name on other occasions.

Considering that they had spoken to one another before, it was likely that Wei Changfeng's visit meant business.

"Vice School Head You sure is a candid man. I do have a request to ask of you..." Wei Changfeng bowed. "I hope to purchase Vice School Head You's Ten-leafed Flower!"

"Ten-leafed Flower?"

Glancing at the saint herb which was pulsating with spiritual energy in the courtyard, Vice School Head You shook his head and replied, "Pardon me, but that medicinal herb is not for sale!"

Wei Changfeng immediately panicked. "I require the medicinal herb to save my kin, I hope that Vice School Head You can do me this favor..."

"I have already said that the medicinal herb is not for sale. Sun Yuan, send our guests out!" Vice School Head You waved his hands.

"Yes!"

Sun laoshi stepped forward and bowed. "This way please."

"This..." Wei Changfeng looked at Vice School Head You with an anxious frown.

"I know that it is somewhat rude of me to suddenly arrive at your

residence and ask for your medicinal herb, but I truly need it to save someone. Vice School Head You, I am willing to pay any price for your Ten-leafed Flower as long as it is within my means!"

Chapter 791: Price

"It's not a problem of the price, but my teacher simply has no intention of selling any of these medicinal herbs. I ask for your understanding!" Sun Yuan bowed.

Hearing those words, Wei Changfeng clenched his jaws anxiously.

As long as the other party was willing to sell it, even if he had to risk bankruptcy, he would surely purchase it. But... if the other party wasn't willing to sell it, he couldn't possibly go to the extent of stealing it, right?

Putting aside whether he was a match for Vice School Head You or not, just the fact that they were in the Master Teacher Academy quickly dispelled such thoughts.

"I truly require this saint herb to nourish my daughter's soul in order to save her. I beseech Vice School Head You to just do me this favor..." Taking a deep breath, Wei Changfeng kneeled onto the floor.

"Haa..." Seeing Wei Changfeng's actions, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

For his daughter's sake, he had already kneeled twice.

For a Saint realm expert to put down his dignity and everything he had for another... this is a parent!

Their love for their children is simple and innocent, noble and powerful. For their children, they are willing to do anything.

"I said that I won't sell it! Even if you kneel to your death here, my decision will not change. You should leave!" Vice School Head You waved Wei Changfeng away impassively, unmoved by Wei Changfeng's actions.

"Vice School Head You..." Wei Changfeng's fingernails dug deep

into his flesh.

They were all Saint realm experts, existences that stood at the top of Hongyuan City. Yet, despite kneeling down and pleading with Vice School Head You, the latter still remained unmoved.

Seeing that Vice School Head You was unwilling to relent at all, Zhang Xuan shook his head. Just as he was about to step forward to speak in Wei Changfeng's stead, a series of knocking suddenly sounded from the gates.

Dong dong dong dong!

Sun Yuan left to get the door, and before long, he returned with a middle-aged man behind him.

The middle-aged man clasped his fist. "Vice School Head You, my teacher requires a Saint-tier Origin Harnessing Grass for his pill forging!"

"Origin Harnessing Grass?" Vice School Head Xu nodded. "Sun Yuan, go and get it for Zhuo shi!"

"Yes!" Sun Yuan nodded. He walked into the herb garden, dug out a light green-colored medicinal herb, and passed it over to the middle-aged man.

"Thank you!" The middle-aged man nodded as he flicked his wrist, taking out ten high-tier spirit stones. "Here is the payment for the medicine!"

Vice School Head You took the spirit stones, and the middle-aged man placed the Origin Harnessing Grass in his storage ring before leaving.

In just a few minutes, this deal was completed.

"Vice School Head You, didn't you say that you aren't going to sell any medicinal herbs? Why did you sell it to that Zhuo shi then?" Seeing how the middle-aged man was able to obtain a medicinal herb so easily from You Xu and yet he had been rejected even

though he had already gotten onto his knees, Wei Changfeng clenched his fists in fury, and veins popped out from his temples.

Watching the scene, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows also knitted together into a frown.

If it was You Xu's principle not to sell medicinal herbs to anyone, there would be nothing that they could say... But the other party had rejected Wei Changfeng's desperate request only to sell a medicinal herb to that Zhuo shi so easily the next moment...

This preferential treatment was way too much!

Vice School Head You harrumphed in response. "Zhuo shi's teacher is the head of the Apothecary School, School Head Lu Feng. I have a close relationship with him, so naturally I am willing to sell my medicinal herbs to him. But on the other hand... I don't think that you and I are so close that I need to sell my medicinal herbs to you, right?"

"I..." Wei Changfeng clenched his jaws in indignation, but there wasn't anything he could refute about Vice School Head You's words.

The other party was right. Considering that there was no relationship between them, there was no reason the other party had to sell the medicinal herb to him. If the other party was willing to sell it, it would be goodwill on his part. But if he wasn't, it would be his freedom of choice to do so as well.

Unable to watch on any further, Zhang Xuan stepped forward and clasped his fist. "Vice School Head You is right, but the main use of a medicinal herb should be to save lives. Physicians should have compassion in their hearts; they shouldn't disregard a life just because they aren't close with the other party! The life of Boss Wei's daughter is currently hinging on your Ten-leafed Flower, so I ask of Vice School Head You to have mercy on her!"

"Who are you to butt into our conversation?" Vice School Head

You frowned in displeasure.

He was a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, a vice head of the Physician School. When had he been preached to by another before, not to mention, by a twenty-year-old brat at that?

"I am Zhang Xuan, a freshman of the academy," Zhang Xuan replied.

"Oh, so you are that Zhang Xuan?" Vice School Head You sneered. "I've heard of you. You might have won School Head Mo and School Head Zhao's favor, but before me, you are nothing more than a junior. Know your place!"

"Despite being a student of this academy, you chose not to focus your efforts on your study and instead went around stirring trouble, sullyng the reputation of master teachers. If you were my student, I would have long expelled you from my lineage!"

At this point, he glanced at Zhang Xuan disdainfully and said, "Before you incur my ire, you'd better leave this instant. Otherwise, don't blame me for getting nasty with you."

"Getting nasty with me?"

"Indeed. Since you are a freshman, you'd better act like one and obey the rules. Yet, here you are, brazen, conceited, and disrespectful... If you continue acting like this, I don't mind teaching you a lesson in your teacher's stead!" With his hands behind his back, Vice School Head You flung his sleeves.

"Teach me a lesson in my teacher's stead? You?"

Sensing the other party's hostility toward him, Zhang Xuan didn't bother holding back either. "Who are you to talk about the reputation of the master teachers? That is something for the Master Teacher Pavilion and the Master Teacher Academy to decide! Besides, even though we are in your residence now, this is the property of the academy. Chase me away... Are you sure you are qualified to do so? If I recall correctly..."

At this point, Zhang Xuan's lips curled up in a smirk. "You aren't the school head yet, right?"

If others were to treat him with respect, Zhang Xuan would regard them with respect as well.

But the other party had spoken about how he'd sullied the reputation of the master teachers and that he would expel him from his lineage right from the get-go... No matter how good Zhang Xuan's temper was, how could he tolerate this?

Reputation was extremely important to a master teacher.

Without a clear reputation, how could they earn the respect of others?

This was also one of the reasons Zhang Xuan eventually chose to transfuse his soul essence to Wei Ruyan despite the risks.

Yet, the other party had insulted him as soon as he began to speak. That was a clear provocation, and it had already crossed his bottom line.

"Audacious! Do you know who you are speaking to?" Not expecting a freshman to talk back to him, Vice School Head You's face turned livid with rage.

"Who am I speaking to? Of course I know, 6-star master teacher You Xu, the vice school head of the Physician School! But do you know who you are speaking to?"

With an upright back, Zhang Xuan emanated an overwhelming aura of confidence.

"I am the honored guest of Pavilion Master Mo, School Head Mo, School Head Zhao, and School Head Wei, and they have entrusted their personal tokens to me as a symbol of that. On top of that, I am a 6-star blacksmith and a 6-star terpsichore. Yet, you dare to insult and threaten me... Isn't it clear who is the one who is being audacious here?"

A master teacher couldn't allow their dignity to be trampled upon.

That was all the more true for a Celestial Master Teacher like him!

"You..." Vice School Head You narrowed his eyes in fury.

He had heard of Zhang Xuan's affairs as well. The latter had raised a huge storm as soon as he'd arrived in the academy, and at this point, there was probably no one in the academy, be it the freshmen, seniors, or even teachers, who didn't know of his name.

Vice School Head You harbored a deep dislike for those who showed no regard for the rules, so he had intended to teach Zhang Xuan a lesson so as to suppress his arrogance. Who would have thought that the tables would turn on him instead?

The other party was right. The personal tokens of the three school heads represented their very presence. To chase three school heads away from his residence was a huge act of disrespect toward them, so it was indeed a faux pas on his part.

Even though he was a 6-star pinnacle master teacher as well, his standing was nowhere on par with the Ten Great Master Teachers.

"I brought my subordinate here to purchase a saint herb from you, and if you have any request for us, we are more than willing to listen. However, despite being a 6-star master teacher, you made a verbal assault on me as a person, insulting me as you pleased. If I report this matter to the academy, I wonder if they will be willing to redress my grievances!" Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly.

"You... Good, good!" Not expecting that the words he had uttered in a moment of fury would actually be used against him, Vice School Head You's complexion turned incredibly awful.

A master teacher should have a bearing worthy of one.

As a 6-star master teacher, it was truly unbecoming of him to insult and humiliate a 6-star blacksmith.

If this matter were to be reported to the Master Teacher Academy, while it was unlikely that he would suffer any severe punishment, it would indubitably leave a stain on his records. Furthermore, if the students were to learn of his matter, he would be unable to keep his head held high in the Physician School.

He had long heard of Zhang Xuan's astounding deeds, but he didn't think that his words would be so sharp as well.

Knowing that he would only corner himself further if he were to continue bickering with the other party, Vice School Head You chose to change the topic decisively. "It took me a lot of effort to cultivate the Ten-leafed Flower. However, seeing that you really need it, I can consider selling it to you."

Vice School Head You's abrupt change in his words left Zhang Xuan and Wei Changfeng bewildered. The duo exchanged doubtful glances.

"However, the price might be a little steep!" Vice School Head You said.

"Please speak!" Wei Changfeng clasped his fist.

Even though he had no idea what the other party was up to, it was still good news for him that the other party was willing to sell the Ten-leafed Flower to him.

"I need a stalk of Cloudmist Flower. If you can bring me a Cloudmist Flower within two days, I will trade my Ten-leafed Flower for it!" Vice School Head You said.

"Cloudmist Flower?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Despite being a 4-star physician, he had never heard of this medicinal herb before.

Just as Zhang Xuan was going to ask what it was, he suddenly saw Wei Changfeng's face turning pale, and his body began trembling lightly.

"You know what it is?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"The Cloudmist Flower is a unique plant that appears only in the Cloudmist Ridge of Hongyuan Mountain Range. However, it isn't a medicinal herb... If one dries it first before boiling it in water, it will produce a stream of billowing steam reminiscent of the clouds. The Cloudmist Flower is an extremely precious tea leaf!" Wei Changfeng explained.

"Tea leaf? Exchanging a tea leaf for the Ten-leafed Flower?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

The Ten-leafed Flower was a Saint-tier medicinal herb. Even in the market, it would easily fetch at least ten high-tier spirit stones. To exchange it for a tea leaf... Wasn't this too good a deal?

"Yes!" Wei Changfeng nodded. He opened his mouth once again to continue speaking, but at the very last moment, he changed his mind and turned to Vice School Head You instead. "Alright, I'll agree to it!"

"Good. I'll be waiting for your good news then." Chuckling lightly, Vice School Head You waved his hands.

"Rest assured! As long as you keep the end of your promise, I'll definitely succeed!" Wei Changfeng said with his fists clenched tightly behind his back. Taking a deep breath, he turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "Young Master, let's go!"

Since the negotiation was over, Zhang Xuan nodded, and the duo left the residence.

Shortly after they left, Sun Yuan turned to his teacher and asked, "Teacher, the Cloudmist Ridge is filled with saint beasts. Even if a master of beast taming like School Head Mo were to venture in there, it would be hard for him to return alive... To ask Boss Wei to pick a Cloudmist Flower from there, isn't that task a little... too dangerous?"

"Too dangerous? Of course I know! But you should have heard

about Wei Changfeng's deeds in Hongyuan City as well... Vermin like him is much better off dead! As for that conceited and disrespectful Zhang Xuan, it would be best if he went along as well. But even if not, he shall learn that a 6-star master teacher... isn't a person whom he can offend that easily!" Vice School Head You sneered.

Chapter 792: It's Yours!

After leaving the residence, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask Wei Changfeng, "Is there something wrong with the Cloudmist Flower?"

No matter how he thought about the matter, it was bizarre that You Xu would suddenly change his mind and sell the Ten-leafed Flower at such an inexpensive price.

"That's not it. It's just that it isn't too easy to procure the Cloudmist Flower. Young Master, don't worry about this. I'll surely get it by hook or by crook to save my daughter!" Wei Changfeng replied with a determined glint in his eyes.

"Is that really it?" Zhang Xuan was still a little doubtful about the matter.

His impression of Vice School Head You wasn't too good, and he didn't think that the latter would be so kind as to let go of his Ten-leafed Flower for a stalk of tea leaf.

"Young Master, don't worry. This issue might be a little problematic, but I'll surely get it done!" Wei Changfeng assured.

Even to save his daughter, he couldn't allow the young master to bear the risk along with him.

Although he wasn't able to see how the treatment went, the fact that the young master had needed to consume a whole Miniature Restorative Pill to recuperate reflected how far he had exerted himself in order to save his daughter.

The young master had already gone this far to save his daughter, so he couldn't allow him to worry over this matter as well.

"Alright then... If you truly need help, feel free to tell me. Even though my cultivation might be beneath yours, I do have quite a few aces up my sleeves!" Seeing that Wei Changfeng was unwilling to speak about it, Zhang Xuan decided not to probe any further.

"Thank you, Young Master!" Wei Changfeng nodded.

"The Cloudmist Ridge is quite a distance away, so I'll have to rush a bit to make it back in two days. I will have to make some preparations as well, so I'll be taking my leave first!"

"Okay, go on." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Even though he still couldn't help but feel that something was amiss, considering that Wei Changfeng was a Saint realm expert and the boss of the Spirit Emporium, he decided to put his worries aside.

Hu!

After bidding Zhang Xuan farewell, Wei Changfeng immediately leaped into the sky, and in just a few moments, he had already disappeared from sight.

Saint realm experts were capable of flight, and even without aerial spirit beasts to carry them, they could travel tens of thousands of kilometers each day.

I should return to my residence as well!

After Wei Changfeng's departure, Zhang Xuan sighed a breath of relief. He was finally done settling the matters he had at hand, and fatigue began to set in once again.

Meeting Hu Yaoyao, browsing through the books in the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion, cultivating, establishing a student faction, saving Wei Ruyan... Due to this whole string of events coming up one after another, he had already been awake for two days.

Fatigued, he headed right for his residence in the Elite Sector right after leaving the Physician School.

As soon as he pushed open the door to his residence, he saw Luo Qiqi walking up to him excitedly. "Teacher!"

In the time of Zhang Xuan's coma, in order to better take care of

him, Luo Qiqi had created a spare key so that she could access the residence easier.

"You're here." Zhang Xuan nodded.

After the establishment of the Xuanxuan Faction, while the others were discussing the various administrative and logistical matters, he had Luo Qiqi return to take a good rest.

"Teacher, Senior Hu Yaoyao has been here since this morning..." Luo Qiqi told him via zhenqi telepathy.

"I see." Zhang Xuan nodded.

The previous night, after teaching that conceited lass a lesson, he instructed her to report at his residence in the morning. It seemed like she was at least still punctual.

Walking into the main hall, Zhang Xuan saw Hu Yaoyao waiting inside. The air of superiority she'd held before had disappeared, and instead, Zhang Xuan could see a hint of respect and deference in her eyes.

The matter yesterday had left her slightly fearful.

She had utilized all her means against Zhang Xuan, but not only were they ineffective, she even had the favor reversed on her, resulting in her being berated by her teacher... On top of that, after practicing the revised Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe and realizing how exceptional it was, she dared not pull her weight before the other party anymore.

Walking up to Zhang Xuan, Hu Yaoyao clenched her fists tightly and bowed slightly.

"Zhang shi."

As expected of one of the top beauties of the academy. Despite being dressed in the standard master teacher robe, the disposition she commanded, along with her movements and gestures, naturally left one's heart fluttering.

Her barely visible curvaceous figure under the loose robe seemed to spark one's imagination.

However, Zhang Xuan was completely impervious to all of that. He glanced at her nonchalantly and asked, "Do you know why I chose to take you in as my apprentice?"

Hu Yaoyao nodded. "You want me to tell you where Wu Yangzi's old residence is."

Saying those words, she couldn't help but feel slightly frustrated.

She was the leader of the Bewitching Devil Faction, a famed beauty and genius in the academy... Yet, he seemed so reluctant to have her become his apprentice... Just the thought of it left her feeling frenzied within.

Just how could there be such an oddball in the world?

She had thought that with her charms, she would be able to make any men obey her commands. But before Zhang Xuan, she felt as if her charm was worth less than a high-tier spirit stone.

"That's right. You can speak now." Seeing Hu Yaoyao understand her current position, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

Indeed. That was the sole reason he had decided for her to become his apprentice. Otherwise, why in the world would he bother getting involved with such an eccentric and problematic person? It was not as if he had a lack of subordinates.

"Even if I were to point out the location, you will probably find it hard to believe. Instead, why don't I take you there instead?" Hu Yaoyao offered.

"Fine by me. Lead the way then." Zhang Xuan gestured toward the door.

Even though he was extremely exhausted at the moment, there was still some time before nightfall. Besides, it would be better to get this over and done with as soon as possible too.

"Alright then."

Hu Yaoyao nodded and made her way out of the residence.

Zhang Xuan beckoned for Luo Qiqi, and the two of them followed closely behind her.

Leaving the Master Teacher Academy, they walked through several streets and alleys, and soon, a magnificent manor appeared before their eyes.

Its incredible size and spectacular architecture gave the manor an air of majesty around it. With just a glance, one could tell that it belonged to someone extraordinary.

"This is the place!" Hu Yaoyao came to a stop before the magnificent manor and gestured.

"Here?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

The courtyard, walls, bricks, and even the architecture style were all new! There was no sign of age whatsoever. This was Wu Yangzi's old residence?

Was this for real?

As one of the greatest blacksmith in his time, even if Wu Yangzi had gone missing, there would surely have been someone to maintain his residence to serve as a historical monument for future generations to honor him.

But this residence was completely brand new. There was no sign of wear and tear at all!

It was no wonder Hu Yaoyao had declared confidently that no one other than her knew the location of Wu Yangzi's old residence.

Even if someone managed to trace down the location to this magnificent manor, there was no way they would believe that this was it!

"This was the place where Elder Wu Yangzi lived two thousand years ago!" Hu Yaoyao nodded.

"But this entire manor is brand new; there isn't any sign of it being Wu Yangzi's old residence at all. How can you be certain that this is it?" Zhang Xuan couldn't help but ask.

Luo Qiqi was also curious about this.

This matter concerned the treasures that Wu Yangzi had left behind. If they couldn't even find his old residence, it would be impossible for them to obtain his treasure.

"I can't tell you how I know, but I can tell you for sure that this is it. Of the entire Hongyuan City, I am the only one who knows this!" Hu Yaoyao replied with a mysterious smile.

"Alright then." Seeing that Hu Yaoyao was unwilling to speak, Zhang Xuan knew that it would be useless even if he probed on.

In any case, the important thing was that they had found Wu Yangzi's old residence. Anything else was of little concern.

Thus, he turned his attention back to the manor.

The entrance had crimson doors made out of teak. Reeking of paint, it seemed like it had just been refurbished not too long ago.

The doors were tightly shut, but one could hear the sound of builders at work inside.

However, what was peculiar was even though the manor was in the midst of refurbishment, there was not a single person outside, not even a guard.

Typically speaking, manors of such a size would have guards standing at the doorway to ward off intruders and uninvited guests. However, there was nothing of that sort here. It was as if no one lived here.

"Shall I knock on the door?" Luo Qiqi asked.

"Let's hold that off for now..." Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Let's find a place to take a seat first."

For the time being, it was good enough for them to have

confirmed that this manor was where Wu Yangzi's old residence was situated.

In order to find the treasure, it was likely that they would have to search throughout the manor, but if they were to do it recklessly, they might just make the owner suspicious, and that could complicate the matter. Thus, it was imperative that they planned this through.

For starters, it would be best for them to look into who the owner was before deciding on the next course of action.

After looking around, Zhang Xuan found a teahouse not too far away which had a clear view of the manor. Thus, beckoning the other two, the trio headed there.

Even though the teahouse was near the main street, as it was already approaching evening, there weren't many people in there, and it was relatively tranquil.

Heading straight to the second floor, they ordered a pot of tea. Afterward, as a waiter filled their cups, Zhang Xuan tossed him a middle-tier spirit stone and asked, "Lad, I have a question to ask you!"

The waiter's eyes lit up upon seeing the spirit stone, and he hurriedly clasped his fist. "Gongzi, feel free to speak. As long as it's not beyond me, I will answer any question you have!"

"To whom does the manor over there belong to? It doesn't look bad!" Zhang Xuan pointed to the manor opposite to the teahouse as he spoke.

"That manor? I'm not too sure of that either. It has been switching hands quite often recently. In the two years that I have been here, its owner has already changed thrice... no, with this, it should be the fourth time!" the waiter replied with a smile.

"It is already at its fourth owner? Why? Isn't it situated in a prime location?" Zhang Xuan asked, puzzled.

"It is! That manor is close to the Master Teacher Academy, and it is facing the main street too. There is truly nothing to complain about its location! I'm not too sure about the details as well, but two years ago, when I first started working at this teahouse, it was a merchant who was living in there. However, I heard that two months after he bought down the manor, it seemed like an internal conflict broke out within his clan, and his business was adversely affected. Facing financial problems, the merchant had no choice but to sell the manor.

"The one whom the merchant sold the manor to was a high-ranking official of Hongyuan City. However, not too long after he got the residence, he was dispatched to another city to serve as its governor.

"Thus, the manor was then passed on to a gentleman whose surname is Zhao. He's a friendly person, and he often comes here for tea as well. He stayed in the manor for almost a year, but just a few days ago, he sold the manor to another person. The new owner seems to be an extremely affluent person. I heard that in order to have Zhao move away as soon as possible, he even paid him an additional sum. Currently, he's still in the midst of refurbishing the manor, so I don't think he has moved in yet. So far, I haven't had the chance to meet the new owner, so I'm not too sure who he is either," the waiter said.

"It was just sold a few days ago?" Zhang Xuan fell into thought.

He couldn't help but recall how Sun Qiang had said that he'd found a residence with an ideal location a few days ago, but another person had taken it before he could. Could it be that this manor was the residence which Sun Qiang had been talking about?

"Thank you, you may go now." After asking a few more questions and confirming that the waiter knew nothing about the new owner, Zhang Xuan gestured for the waiter to leave.

He sent a telepathic message to the Great Violetwing Beast to

have it bring Sun Qiang over before returning back to sipping on his tea.

Not too long later, the Great Violetwing Beast appeared in the vicinity of the teahouse, and Sun Qiang leaped off its back and hurried toward Zhang Xuan.

"Young Master, you were looking for me?" Sun Qiang bowed.

"Yes. Is the manor over there the one that you were talking about previously?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Sun Qiang took a look at the manor before nodding. "Indeed. That's the residence which I wanted to purchase, but an affluent man clinched the deal instead..."

Both the size of the manor and the location which it was situated in fitted the young master's request perfectly. However, it was a pity that they didn't have sufficient money to outbid the other party, or else there was no way he would have given up on it.

"Do you know the details of that affluent man?" Zhang Xuan asked.

After a moment of contemplation, Sun Qiang replied, "That... I'm not too sure either. However, I think it should be possible to get his details by visiting the realtor agency where the trade was made!"

To officialize the sales of a residence, the documents regarding the exchange of deed had to be filed at a realtor agency. As such, it shouldn't be too difficult to uncover the identity of the new owner of the manor.

"Find out who the new owner of that manor is. I want the answer within two hours!" As Sun Qiang used to be in the realtor industry as well, he was more familiar with the various proceedings in the field, so it shouldn't take him too long.

"Yes!" Nodding affirmatively, Sun Qiang left the teahouse.

Around an hour later, he returned with a peculiar look on his

face. His eyes were widened in disbelief, as if he had just seen a ghost.

"What's wrong?" Seeing Sun Qiang's expression, Zhang Xuan was slightly puzzled.

"Young Master, is there any other freshman in the Master Teacher Academy who goes by the name of... Zhang Xuan too?" Sun Qiang asked with a bizarre look on his face.

"I should be the only one." Zhang Xuan frowned. "Didn't I ask you to look into who the new owner of the manor is? Why are you asking that instead?"

Considering Zhang Xuan's fame in the Master Teacher Academy, he should have at least heard about it if there was anyone of the thirty thousand students who shared the same name as him.

"If there is no one who shares the same name, then..."

At which, Sun Qiang took in a deep breath and said, "I think the manor belongs to you!"

Chapter 793: Zheng Yang Accepts a Disciple

"Mine?" Zhang Xuan was stunned. His hands trembled, and tea spilled from the cup he held in his hands. "What do you mean by it belongs to me?"

"I just went to the realtor agency to look into the matter, and according to the document filed there, the new owner goes by the name of Zhang Xuan!" Sun Qiang seemed to be in a state of disbelief as well as he spoke.

"I found it weird as well, so I asked them about that Zhang Xuan's occupation and identity. The answer I received was that he is a Grade-1 freshman of the Master Teacher Academy. This is also why I asked Young Master if there is anyone who shares the same name as you among the freshmen. If there isn't... the only possibility left is that the owner of the manor is you!"

"This..." Zhang Xuan blinked in a daze, nearly fainting from shock.

He had never seen this manor before, and he didn't have the money to buy such a large manor either. How could it possibly be his?

If it had been a day before, he would have been certain that it must be a freshman who just coincidentally shared the same name as him. However, Zhang Xuan had replicated a copy of the registry with the names of all of the Xuanxuan Faction's members in it yesterday, and checking it, there was no one with the same name or even a similar sounding name to his.

What was going on?

"What about the buyer? Did you get any information on the person who bought the manor?" Zhang Xuan asked.

If he was registered in the deed, someone must have made the deal in his stead.

But... what was the motive behind doing this?

"I tried looking into it as well, but it seems like even the realtor agency has no idea who the buyer is. They left no information whatsoever with the realtor agency, only saying that the new owner will take over the house once the refurbishment is done," Sun Qiang replied.

The more he tried to dig deeper into the matter, the more bewildered he became.

He had attempted to buy the manor, but he couldn't outbid the other buyer. Yet, mysteriously, the manor was suddenly put under the young master's name?

"This..." Zhang Xuan also found the situation bizarre as well.

He had heard of people giving the wrong amount of money when purchasing items, but he had never heard of people putting down the wrong name on a deed when buying a home.

Zhang Xuan couldn't help but turn to the lady before him and ask, "Luo Qiqi, was this you?"

Of the entire Hongyuan City, the one who was most likely to do such a thing was this student of his.

Luo Qiqi shook her head. "How could it be me? Even if I wished to buy it, I don't have the money to afford such a grand manor..."

"That's true..." Zhang Xuan frowned.

Considering the location and size of the manor, its price could possibly reach up to a hundred high-tier spirit stones... Even with Luo Qiqi's mysterious background, it didn't seem likely that she would have so much money on hand with her.

"Then... could it be Yu Fei-er and the others?"

If it wasn't Luo Qiqi, the only few he could think of were Yu Fei-er, Xing Yuan, and the others. Coming from prestigious clans, not to mention that Yu Fei-er was the Sixth Princess of Hongyuan

Empire at that, it wasn't implausible for them to be able to afford such a manor.

"Fei-er, Xing Yuan, and the others went into seclusion to cultivate after undergoing the Meridian and Bone Cleansing to attempt to make a breakthrough to the Perfect Harmonization realm. I don't think that they have the time to bother about this matter..." Luo Qiqi shook her head.

If they had the time to do something like that, they would have long come to pay a visit to Zhang Xuan, especially since that they had parted abruptly at the underground chamber.

Since they didn't even have the time to do so, how could they possibly have the time to buy a manor for him?

Besides, Yu Fei-er was her close friend. If she had done something like that, there was no reason she would have hidden it from her.

"Then... who could it be?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Mo Gaoyuan, School Head Mo, and the others were plausible candidates, but Zhang Xuan didn't think that it was likely to be them.

Even though they were interested in getting on good terms with him, there were many ways for them to do it. Purchasing a manor and refurbishing it to give it as a gift to him was going overboard, especially in view of their identities as 6-star master teachers. Such actions could easily make them the laughingstock of the city.

"Forget it. Since the other party has written my name on the deed, it should be a matter of time before they appear before me. Otherwise, won't their money have been spent in vain?" After a moment longer of pondering, Zhang Xuan was unable to figure out who it was, so he decided to just put it aside for the time being.

Considering the amount of money invested into purchasing and renovating the manor, it would be foolish for the person in question not to claim credit for their actions.

"Teacher, are we going to move into the manor then?" Luo Qiqi asked.

"Not yet. Since the deed is registered under my name, the person behind this should come to look for me once the refurbishment is done. At that moment, we shall move into the manor openly!" Zhang Xuan gestured.

Since it was already his manor, there was no need for him to worry about the matter anymore. But just to be safe, it would be best for him to meet the person behind it first to confirm their intentions before doing anything.

"Alright!" Luo Qiqi nodded.

"Sun Qiang, tell Wang Ying, Zheng Yang, and Liu Yang that they can stop looking for a residence," Zhang Xuan instructed.

"Yes, Young Master!" Sun Qiang replied.

"Alright, let's return to the academy then!"

Since the owner of the manor was confirmed to be him, his job here was done. After issuing several instructions to Sun Qiang, he returned back to the academy with Luo Qiqi and Hu Yaoyao.

As soon as he returned back to his residence in the Elite Sector, he went to his room and began meditating.

After conditioning his body for around four hours, his fatigue finally vanished.

Turning his sight outside, he realized that it was already the middle of the night. The sky felt a little heavy and gloomy that night. As if someone had pulled a black veil across the sky, there was not a single star or moon to be seen.

Since I am free at the moment, I should pay the Physician School a visit to read their books! Zhang Xuan thought.

Ever since the previous treatment for Wei Ruyan, he realized that his knowledge regarding the Way of Medicine was still lacking, so

he had been thinking about paying a visit to the library of the Physician School.

The more knowledge he accrued, the better chance he stood at saving Wei Ruyan.

Thus, without any hesitation, he drew out his soul, and he began making his way to the Physician School.

From the incident with Wei Ranxue, he had learned that even in his form as a soul, he still had to operate carefully due to the presence of Saint realm experts in the academy. Thus, he advanced slowly, and it took him an hour before he was able to get into the vicinity of the Tower of Physicians.

The library is over there...

While Zhang Xuan was in the Physician School earlier, he had made sure to take a look around to confirm the location of the library. Thus, it didn't take long before he reached his destination

The gigantic building he was currently floating before emanated a solemn and academic aura.

Just like the Terpsichore Compendium Pavilion, entry into its premises required a student token and Academic Credits. Thus, Zhang Xuan waited patiently outside.

Unlike the Terpsichore School, the Physician School was ranked fifth in the academy, and it had several ten thousand students under it. As such, there were many students who visited the library each day, so the wait shouldn't take too long.

As expected, a few minutes later, a student walked out from the entrance. Making use of this opportunity, Zhang Xuan's soul slipped in.

Upon entering the library, an incredible collection of books immediately appeared before his eyes.

"Alright, I should begin!" Chuckling lightly, Zhang Xuan started

scanning through the books with his eyes, and books began materializing in the Library of Heaven's Path at an incredible speed.

...

When Zhang Xuan went back to the Master Teacher Academy, Sun Qiang also returned to their residence.

When night fell, he saw Wang Ying and the others returning with their heads hanging in disappointment.

It was a difficult feat, searching for a suitable residence in the vicinity of the Master Teacher Academy. Otherwise, Sun Qiang would have already found something by now.

"Where is Young Master Zheng Yang? He didn't return with you all?"

Just as Sun Qiang was about to tell them that there was no need to search any longer, he suddenly realized that Zheng Yang was missing, and he frowned.

"We don't know either. We separated in the morning to scour the area for a suitable residence, and I only met Wang Ying on the way back. However, there should be no need to worry. He is probably on his way back," Liu Yang replied.

"Zheng Yang is a wary person, and he has inherited teacher's heritage. He should be fine!" Wang Ying nodded.

Of Zhang Xuan's direct disciples, the one who had the strongest adaptability was Yuan Tao, followed by Zheng Yang. It would already be a blessing to the world if he didn't attempt to do anyone in; how could anything possibly happen to him?

While they were speaking, a figure walked into the courtyard.

Who else could it be if not Zheng Yang?

"Uncle Qiang!" Zheng Yang rushed up with excitement gleaming in his eyes.

Seeing Zheng Yang's expression, Sun Qiang asked doubtfully, "Did you find a residence?"

"That's not it... It's just that I encountered something today, and I wish to discuss it with you!" Zheng Yang scratched his head in embarrassment.

"Discuss with me? What is it?" Sun Qiang asked.

Zhang Xuan had left his students in Sun Qiang's care, so they would often turn to Sun Qiang for most decisions.

"It's like this... While I was outside, I met a person who is interested in learning spearmanship from me. I wish to take him in as my disciple and allow him to stay here for a few days. Is that fine?" Zheng Yang asked embarrassedly.

"You wish to take in a student?" Sun Qiang widened his eyes in shock.

You are still a student yourself, but you wish to accept a student?

"That's right. I saw that that fellow possessed quite a high aptitude in spearmanship, so I gave him some pointers casually. Who would have thought that he would insist on acknowledging me as his teacher afterward? He even gave him quite a sum as a school fee... Seeing how sincere he was, I couldn't bear to turn him down," Zheng Yang said hesitantly.

When he was out looking for a residence earlier in the day, he coincidentally stumbled upon a bullying incident, and out of rage, he drew his spear and taught the bullies a lesson. A young man happened to catch sight of him in action, and impressed by what he saw, the other party insisted on learning spearmanship from him.

After studying diligently under Zhang Shi over the past half a year, Zheng Yang's spearmanship had already reached an unfathomable level. Upon hearing that someone was interested in learning from him, he couldn't help but offer him a few words of

guidance. To his surprise, that young man was extremely intelligent, comprehending what he imparted in an instant.

Even though his spearmanship was still a little weak, it was fortunate that his foundations were still considerably solid. As a result, Zheng Yang's interest in taking the other party as his disciple was piqued.

However... considering that he was still a student himself, he felt that he should discuss this with his teacher first.

But since this teacher wasn't around, the second-best option would be Uncle Qiang.

"He paid you a school fee? How much?" Sun Qiang asked.

"It is all in here!" Zheng Yang passed a storage ring over.

Perplexed, Sun Qiang took the storage ring and had a look inside. The next instant, his eyes widened in shock. "Twenty thousand middle-tier spirit stones? And so many pills as well... Is this the school fee he paid to acknowledge you as his teacher?"

Other than the twenty thousand middle-tier spirit stones, there were various herbs and other miscellaneous stuff inside as well.

Totaling the entire value of the items in the ring, there were definitely at least fifty thousand middle-tier spirit stones...

The other party had paid so much money to learn spearmanship from Zheng Yang?

Just where in the world did Zheng Yang find such a wealthy lad?

"That's right. I wish to take him in as my student... but I fear that Teacher will disagree with it. Uncle Qiang, please help me convince my teacher about this..."

"Don't worry! Given the school fee... Ahem! As a master teacher, the young master surely wishes to spread his teachings far and wide, so you don't have to worry about it!" Sun Qiang smiled.

After the time he had spent with the young master, how could he

possibly not know the latter's character?

As long as one was willing to fork out sufficient money... Putting aside a single disciple, he would even accept an army of them without any hesitation!

Chapter 794: The Excited Xue Zhenyang

"That's great!" Hearing that there was no problem about it, Zheng Yang heaved a sigh of relief. He hurriedly turned to the entrance excitedly and said, "Come in!"

"Yes!"

Hearing those words, a young man wielding a spear walked into the residence. His aura felt condensed and sharp, reminiscent of a blade piercing into the heavens.

In his early thirties, the young man had sharp facial features which gave him a masculine appearance.

"Uncle Qiang, Wang Ying, and Liu Yang, this is the student I have accepted!" Zheng Yang introduced.

"Student Xue Zhenyang pays respect to seniors!" the young man greeted with a clasped fist.

"Xue Zhenyang? Your cultivation... seems to be considerably higher than Zhenyang, isn't it? Why did you choose to acknowledge him as your teacher?" Sun Qiang frowned.

While he wasn't able to gauge the exact level of the other party's cultivation, he could tell that it was definitely far above Zheng Yang's.

Why would an expert of his strength acknowledge a young child as his teacher?

"Even though my cultivation is higher than Zheng laoshi, my comprehension of spearmanship is far beneath him. It's my honor to be able to learn from someone as capable as him!" Xue Zhenyang said respectfully.

Naturally, this was the same Xue Zhenyang from the Master Teacher Academy, the leader of the True Helios Faction, as well as the fellow who was determined to challenge Zhang Xuan.

Having decided to devote his heart to master the 10-dan of the Fallen Leaf Spear, he left the Master Teacher Academy to embark on a training expedition, and in the midst of doing so, he unintentionally caught sight of Zheng Yang's spearmanship.

While the latter's cultivation was far beneath his, his understanding of spearmanship had already achieved the level of SpearMan Union, harnessing immense might.

In a brief conversation with the other party, he realized that the latter's comprehension of spearmanship had already achieved the level of Distillation of the Profound, a direct interpretation of the peak of spear art. As a result, he couldn't help but want to learn from him.

He could see that if he were to learn diligently under the other party's tutelage, he would be able to grasp the 10-dan of the Fallen Leaf Spear perfectly very soon. By then, he would be able to destroy Zhang Xuan and restore the honor of the True Helios Faction!

It was never a humiliation for a master teacher to learn from someone weaker or younger. On the contrary, there had been many of such cases in history.

In the philosophy of master teachers, students are not necessarily inferior to their teacher, and teachers are not necessarily greater than their students. Each and every person has their own strengths, and it is the one proficient in the field that becomes the teacher.

Even Kong shi had studied under those weaker than him, needless to say, other master teachers.

"I see!" Sun Qiang nodded.

As the butler of the old master and the young master, he had a rough understanding of the various doctrines of the master teachers too.

Considering that Zheng Yang was a direct disciple of the young master, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to teach a nobody.

"For the time being, you don't have to look for our residence anymore, so just focus your effort on your cultivation. Zheng Yang, it's fine if you want to impart him spearmanship. I'll report this matter to the young master for you!" Seeing that the other fellow was sincere in wanting to acknowledge Zheng Yang as his teacher, Sun Qiang decided to let them be.

"Un!" Zheng Yang nodded before turning to Xue Zhenyang, "Study diligently for the next few days. Once you reach a satisfactory level, I will bring you to meet my teacher. His comprehension of spearmanship is at least ten times more formidable than me, so don't you embarrass me!"

As he spoke those words, admiration gleamed in his eyes.

"Teacher, rest assured! I will study diligently so as to not disappoint grandteacher!" Xue Zhenyang nodded his head in agitation.

It was no wonder why people say that the true experts live in the streets. Just a random person he met in the streets already possessed such formidable spearmanship, and he even had a teacher who was ten times more formidable than him...

As long as he were to pursue this teacher of his, he had no doubt that he would be able to achieve the 10-dan of Fallen Spear Art soon, and perhaps... he might even find himself reaching a level he had never thought to be possible!

"Un. I will be sparring with your Senior Aunt Wang Ying now, so do watch closely to see how I utilize my spear in the battle!" Zheng Yang said as he drew his spear.

Battle techniques weren't just about comprehending its form and intent. More importantly, one must learn how to incorporate it into battle as well.

As such, sparring was the best way to deepen one's understanding of battle techniques.

"Roger!" Xue Zhenyang nodded excitedly.

"Wang Ying, I'll be troubling you..."

With a swift movement, Zheng Yang's spear suddenly pierced right for Wang Ying with a sharp whiz.

As fellow students, they often sparred with one another, and they were extremely familiar with each other's strength and battle techniques. Upon seeing the pierce, Wang Ying smiled lightly, and with a swift step, her figure vanished like an apparition, dodging the spear.

Hu!

Following which, as swift as lightning, Wang Ying sent a kick right for Zheng Yang's spear. Even though she was executing a battle technique, her movements carried a peculiar elegance to them, reminiscent of a butterfly threading amongst flowers.

"What a formidable movement art and leg art..." Xue Zhenyang widened his eyes in astonishment.

His Senior Aunt Wang Ying's cultivation might be far beneath him, but her mastery of leg art and movement art were far above those teachers of the Martial Arts School.

In fact... he even doubted whether his teacher, the head of the Martial Arts School, School Head Xu Changqing, would be able to execute such a move as well. Her movements were simple, but every single aspect of it, be it the timing, trajectory, or force, was flawless. He had never seen anything like this before!

Hu hu hu hu!

The duo soon completed their sparring. In the process, Xue Zhenyang stared at every single action they made carefully, not daring to even blink for fear of missing the slightest detail.

In this battle, both sides were incredible. The spearmanship, movement art, and leg art utilized in the battle had left his heart thumping with excitement and awe, as if a new world had opened before him.

"Zheng Yang, why don't we give it a go too?" Liu Yang stepped in and asked with a smile.

This was the first time any of them had accepted a student, and for someone as young as they were, it was inevitable that they would be tempted to show off before the other party's student.

"Sure!" Zheng Yang agreed to it heartily. Raising his spear once more, he charged at Liu Yang.

Xue Zhenyang hurriedly turned his attention to the duel, curious to see what his Senior Uncle Liu Yang was capable of.

Unlike Senior Aunt Wang Ying, Senior Uncle Liu Yang couldn't move at unbelievable speed, and he didn't seem to specialize in leg art either. However, what was incredible about him was the sheer might of his fist. Before the attack of Zheng Yang laoshi could strike him, he had already sent out a powerful punch aimed precisely to jolt away Zheng Yang's spear.

Zhenqi burst from his acupoints, and his fist hustled forward with the roar of a tiger.

"What a formidable fist art... Given the same cultivation realm, even Yuan Gang, who specializes in fist art, wouldn't survive a single strike from him..." Xue Zhenyang was overwhelmed by agitation.

He thought that it would take him some time before he could gain a greater insight into spearmanship and comprehend higher tier battle techniques. Who could have thought that in the very first day of his journey, he had already met so many formidable people.

Even though the teacher, Senior Uncle, and Senior Aunt whom

he had just acknowledged weren't as strong as him, their understanding of battle techniques had far surpassed most master teachers in the academy.

Perhaps, even surpassing some of the elders as well!

Unbelievable!

Soon, after his teacher and Senior Uncle Liu Yang was done sparring, the duo smiled at one another before turning to Xue Zhenyang, "How is it?"

"Teacher, Senior Uncle, and Senior Aunt, if it isn't too much, I... have a request to ask of you." Taking a deep breath, Xue Zhenyang suppressed his agitation and bowed with clasp fist.

"Oh?" Seeing Xue Zhenyang's grim expression, everyone immediately pricked their ears in curiosity.

"It's like that... I have established a faction, and most of my followers are interested in battle techniques, spending most of their life devoted to the study martial arts. If it isn't too much, may I invite teacher, Senior Aunt, and Senior Uncle to conduct a few lectures for them to impart them the essence of battle techniques?" Xue Zhenyang asked nervously.

"Lecture?" Wang Ying, Zheng Yang, and Liu Yang glanced at one another with a distressed look on their faces. "We are not master teachers, how can we lecture?"

In the Master Teacher Continent, 'lecture' was a word that was usually associated with only master teachers. They might possess a deep understanding of battle techniques, but to lecture others despite not being a master teacher... Wouldn't they be overstepping their boundaries if so?

"Even though you aren't master teachers, you have reached a level of mastery in your field of battle techniques which most master teachers would never achieve in their lifetime. Even though it might not be much, I'll have my followers pay a school fee for

the lecture as a token of our sincerity..." After a moment of hesitation, Xue Zhenyang said.

If he could invite the three of them to his faction to lecture his followers, the fighting prowess of his followers would surely soar. If so, it would be a matter of time before the True Helios Faction became the number one faction in the academy!

With that, he would be able to cleanse the humiliation he had suffered from Zhang Xuan.

"School fee? How much?"

Before Wang Ying and the others could respond, Sun Qiang, who had been listening to the conversation by the side, asked with an excited gleam in his eyes.

As the butler of the group, he was in charge of in charge of the finances and logistics of the group. Naturally, he understood the importance of money as well.

Currently, the spirit stones earned by the young master wasn't even enough to sustain his cultivation. It was about time for them to step up and provide for themselves.

If Wang Ying and the others could make use of this opportunity to earn a bit of money, they would be able to overcome the current financial crisis they were suffering from. The young master would surely be more than delighted to see this.

"This... I will have each of them pay a hundred middle-tier spirit stones to you. I have a total of 500 followers, so it should add up to fifty thousand middle-tier spirit stones..." Xue Zhenyang said.

The True Helios Faction was a famous faction in the academy, with over two thousand members under their command. However, the only ones whose field of specialty collided with these three probably only numbered five hundred.

"Five hundred? A hundred from each person?" Sun Qiang's eyes lit up.

Through a single event, they could earn more than fifty thousand middle-tier spirit stones!

"I see... Why don't we set the price a two hundred, and not only will they impart the essence of battle techniques, they will also decipher the foundation of cultivation. Don't worry, I can guarantee you that this is a deal you won't regret it!" After a moment of contemplation, Sun Qiang said.

"Foundation of cultivation?" Xue Zhenyang was taken aback.

"That's right. Wang Ying, tell him a bit about the cultivation method of Prolonged Longevity realm!" Sun Qiang nodded.

"Yes!" Wang Ying nodded, and after organizing her thoughts for a moment, she began to speak.

Prolonged Longevity realm was the first dan of Transcendent Mortal, and it laid the foundation for all of the realms to come. If cultivated improperly, not only would one's further progress slow, it might even create an invisible cap on the person's eventual accomplishment!

Wang Ying hadn't read many books on the topic before, but as a cultivator of a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art and having learned directly from Zhang Xuan, her understanding of the subject had reached an astonishing level.

With just a few words from her, Xue Zhenyang's body was already convulsing with excitement.

The proposed cultivation method allowed the cultivator to first built a strong foundation before delving deeper into the cultivation realm, creating an extremely stable base... Not even the greatest teacher in the academy could come up with something as ingenious as that!

It could be said that this cultivation method close to perfection. Just by hearing a small portion of it, Xue Zhenyang had already benefitted greatly from the impartation.

"This is wonderful! If my followers can listen to this as well, they would be able to reinforce their foundation and cultivate even faster!"

The more Xue Zhenyang thought about it, the more agitated he became. He immediately turned to look at Wang Ying and the others in agitation, as if he was looking at a mountain of gold.

Even though he had no idea what master teacher could groom such talented students, there was one thing he did know... The rise of the True Helios Faction was on the horizon!

If his followers could listen to their lecture as well, not only would the members of the True Helios Faction enjoy tremendous progress in their cultivation and understanding of battle techniques, the True Helios Faction would also be able to attract a steady stream of students applying for it!

With this, he would be able to rise over the others and reach the top!

"Hahaha, Zhang Xuan! Let's see how you can compete with this!"

Xue Zhenyang's eyes lit up with excitement, and for a brief moment, he could almost see the radiant future of the True Helios Faction before him.

Chapter 795: Nothing Must Happen To You!

"How is it? This decipher of the foundations of cultivation is worth two hundred middle-tier spirit stones, right?" Seeing Xue Zhenyang's expression, Sun Qiang could immediately tell that he was drawn to the content of Wang Ying's words, so he pushed on with a smile.

He had absolute confidence with the old master and the young master's interpretation of cultivation.

Since the old master was able to make so many formidable master teachers submit him, surely winning over a nobody like the other party should be a walk in the park for his grandstudent?

"Worth, it is definitely worth two hundred middle-tier spirit stones!" Xue Zhenyang nodded vehemently.

"Good. So as we have agreed, each lecture conducted by Wang Ying, Zheng Yang, and Liu Yang will cost two hundred middle-tier spirit stones for each person. I will have to ask you to first prepare the spirit stones in advance before the lecture, or else... I'm afraid that we'll have to drop the matter!"

As a true merchant, Sun Qiang was determined to wring the greatest benefit out of any deal he made.

"Two hundred middle-tier spirit stones per lecture?" Xue Zhenyang's lips twitched violently. Nevertheless, he still nodded swiftly, "Alright!"

Master teachers did conduct public lectures from time to time, and the price they charged tended to be on the pricey side. Considering the deep comprehension of cultivation and battle techniques that the three of them possessed, charging two hundred middle-tier spirit stones could already be considered as cheap.

When Kong shi first established the Master Teacher Pavilion, while his ideology was to enlighten the masses and bring humanity

to greater heights, his intent wasn't to impart everything unreservedly to everyone.

Otherwise, he wouldn't pass down his heritage to only the 72 Sages.

It was said that Kong shi's initial intent regarding the Master Teacher Pavilion was indeed accessible knowledge without discrimination. However, there was an event where a student had misinterpreted his cultivation technique and imparted his flawed interpretation on to many talented geniuses, resulting in their eventual downfall.

Considering the profoundness of battle techniques, it was extremely easy for one to veer down the wrong path without proper guidance from a teacher.

Knowledge is as destructive as it is beneficial. This was also the intent behind the saying 'knowledge is not to be divulged indiscriminately, and skills are not to be passed down easily'.

Master teachers were humans as well, they had limited time and energy on their hands. Thus, they could only focus their efforts on a few students at a time to pass their true heritage down to.

This was also the reason why there was the eventual classification of direct disciple, normal student, listening in, and half-teacher.

From that perspective, conducting public lectures could be considered as an additional service performed by master teachers, and master teachers did require money as well. Thus, it became a convention to charge a fee for such public lectures.

"Good! We'll leave the arrangements to you then! When will the lecture be?" Seeing Xue Zhenyang agree to it, Sun Qiang nodded in satisfaction.

Just as they were frustrating over the lack of money, the other party came and delivered a carriage of it to them. He sure was a

good man!

However, this was indeed a viable source of income. If they were to find themselves tight on their finances at any moment, they could just conduct public lectures, and money would start rolling in...

"It would be best for it to be done as soon as possible! Is tomorrow morning fine?" Xue Zhenyang asked.

Since this was an opportunity for the True Helios Faction to soar, it would be best for it to be done as soon as possible!

"Morning?" Not expecting the other party to be so anxious, Sun Qiang hesitated for a moment before nodding, "That's fine as well!"

This wasn't a serious matter anyway, so it shouldn't be a problem. He could just report it to the young master once it was over.

"Great! I will bring you all to the Master Teacher Academy with me tomorrow morning then!" Hearing the other party agree to it, Xue Zhenyang nodded in excitement.

"Master Teacher Academy?" Hearing those words, everyone leaped in shock. Sun Qiang asked in astonishment, "You are... a master teacher?"

"Indeed!" Xue Zhenyang nodded.

"This..." Everyone glanced at one another with a troubled look on their faces.

They had thought the other party was a nobody, but to think that he would be a student from the Master Teacher Academy...

Young master was currently in the academy as well. Wouldn't it be bad for them to conduct a lesson there without asking for his permission?

"Uncle Qiang, what do we do?" Everyone's gaze gathered on Sun Qiang, and Zheng Yang sent a telepathic message over.

"This... It shouldn't be anything much, I think... So what if the ones you are going to lecture to are master teachers? There are plenty of master teachers out there who have submitted to the old master. Isn't even Pavilion Master Mo filled with admiration for him as well? As the grandstudent of such a figure, there's nothing for you to be afraid of! As long as you explain the concepts the young master has imparted you carefully, there shouldn't be any problem!" After a moment of hesitation, Sun Qiang replied with gritted teeth.

What about the Master Teacher Academy? He had never feared anything before, so why should he fear it?

It was the other party who was inviting them over to conduct a lecture, not that they were forcing the other party into it.

Moreover, to allow money that was nearly in their pockets to slip away...

"Then... on teacher's side..." Wang Ying asked worriedly.

"Leave the young master to me, you just have to focus your effort on conducting the lecture... As long as you do a good job, the young master shouldn't have any objections to the matter!" Sun Qiang replied.

Given the dire state of their finances, surely beggars couldn't be choosers?

It wasn't easy for them to meet a God of Fortune. It would be a huge shame if they were to let this opportunity slip past their fingers.

The young master should be able to understand the rationale of their action.

"Alright... Teacher has been taking care of us all along, it's time for us to do something for him!"

Wang Ying and the others clenched their fists tightly.

The resources for their cultivation had always come from their teacher. Since this was a rare opportunity to give back to him, it was natural that they would be excited to do so.

"It's decided then. Xue Zhenyang, you should rest here tonight. Wang Ying, Zheng Yang, and Liu Yang will follow you to the Master Teacher Academy tomorrow!" Having come to a decision, Sun Qiang turned to Xue Zhenyang and said.

"Roger!" Xue Zhenyang nodded excitedly.

...

Hu!

After several hours, Zhang Xuan finally finished taking in all of the books in the library of the Physician School into the Library of Heaven's Path, and he heaved a sigh of relief.

After which, making use of the opportunity of another student's entrance, he slipped out of the library and returned back to his residence.

"Compile!"

With a thought, the books came together and formed six books, ranging from 1-star to 6-star.

Since he was already a 4-star physician, there was no purpose in reading the earlier books. Thus, he picked up the fifth book straight.

Huala!

The content of the book flowed into Zhang Xuan's head, and he swiftly began assimilating the knowledge.

It took a while before he was able to fully comprehend the wisdom contained within the book.

Following which, he turned to the sixth book.

An hour later, he was done assimilating the knowledge within it

as well.

After that, he went back to browse through the earlier four books, and as he had expected, their crux was similar to what he had compiled earlier.

"Right now, my knowledge in the Way of Medicine should be on par with 6-star pinnacle physicians..."

After he was finally done studying the six Heaven's Path Physician Art manuals, Zhang Xuan exhaled deeply.

Zhang Xuan's current knowledge in the Way of Medicine ranked at the very peak of 6-star pinnacle. Even the head of the Physician School would be no match for him, and he might even be able to rival some of the less proficient 7-star physicians too.

"Wei Ruyan's illness..."

With the advancement in his understanding of the Way of Medicine, Zhang Xuan began pondering over Wei Ruyan's illness once more. But after some time, he eventually shook his head.

The young lady was struck a heavy blow while she was still in the womb, resulting in her suffering from a Deficiency of Spirit, Soul, and Blood. Her condition was simply too weak that there was nothing he could do other than to nourish her soul and physical body.

"As long as I obtain the Ten-leafed Flower and pair it with some additional medicinal herb to complement its effects, I should be able to hasten the recovery of her soul."

Vice School Head You Xu's Ten-leafed Flower hadn't matured yet, so its effects wouldn't reach ideality. However, with Zhang Xuan's newfound knowledge, he would be able to complement the Ten-leafed Flower with several other medicinal herbs to boost its effectiveness.

"Yet another night has passed!"

Putting aside those thoughts from his mind, Zhang Xuan stretched his back lazily as he walked out of his room, only to realize that the sky had already lit up.

The rays of the sun fell upon the courtyard, reflecting a brilliant gold on the ground.

"Teacher!"

After eating breakfast, Zhang Xuan was just about to head out when Luo Qiqi walked into the residence.

"You came at a good timing. There's something that I forgot to ask you yesterday!" Zhang Xuan said with a smile as he suddenly recalled something that he had neglected yesterday.

He had been too shocked upon learning that the manor where Wu Yangzi's old residence was situated at belonged to him that he forgot to ask Luo Qiqi about that matter.

"Teacher, please speak!" Luo Qiqi said with a perplexed expression.

"Have you heard of the Cloudmist Flower before?" Zhang Xuan asked.

He had noticed some peculiarities in Wei Changfeng yesterday, but he had shrugged it off thinking that it shouldn't be a problem for him as a Saint realm expert. However, the more he thought about it, the more he felt that things weren't that simple.

"Cloudmist Flower? Is teacher referring to the flowers that grow on the Cloudmist Ridge which can be processed into tea leaves?" Luo Qiqi pondered for a moment before replying.

"Yes, that's it!"

He hadn't heard of the Cloudmist Ridge before, but Wei Changfeng did say that the Cloudmist Flower could be dried to serve as tea leaf, and the tea brewed from it produced billowing clouds and had a refreshing fragrance, making it a sought-after

product.

"According to what I have heard from Yu Fei-er, the Cloudmist Flower is a very precious commodity. Not only is it rare, it is very difficult to harvest it as well. Even if one were to take the entire Hongyuan Empire into account, there is barely a few stalks of it. Even the royal family will only use it to welcome esteemed guests of the empire!" Luo Qiqi replied after a moment of contemplation.

"It's so rare?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback. A moment later, a frown emerged on his face as he asked, "You mentioned that it's very difficult to harvest earlier, what does that mean?"

"The Cloudmist Ridge is located in the midst of Hongyuan Mountain Range, and it is home to countless spirit beasts and saint beasts. Any human that steps into the Cloudmist Ridge will suffer their ferocious assaults, making it a dangerous territory to tread. Even a master of beast taming such as School Head Mo wouldn't dare to venture too deep into it!" Luo Qiqi said.

"This is also the reason why the Cloudmist Ridge is classified as a Forbidden Land!"

"Forbidden Land?" Gedeng, Zhang Xuan's heart skipped a beat as his complexion turned awful.

"Indeed!" Seeing Zhang Xuan's expression, Luo Qiqi asked doubtfully, "What's wrong, teacher?"

"If a Saint realm expert were to enter the Cloudmist Ridge to harvest a Cloudmist Flower, what will happen?" Zhang Xuan asked anxiously with a sharp glint in his eyes.

"A Saint realm expert? The odds are that he won't be able to return alive. Even the stock of Cloudmist Flowers that the Hongyuan Empire royal family possesses comes from occasional expeditions with over a dozen Saint realm experts in the team. Even so, they dare not to venture too deep to harvest more for fear of their life. How could a single Saint realm expert survive in such

lands alone? He would surely be killed!" Luo Qiqi shook her head.

"Surely be killed? Damn it!" Zhang Xuan's fists shook uncontrollably.

He finally understood why Wei Changfeng's complexion would look so awful after hearing about the Cloudmist Flower.

It seemed like he knew the dangers associated with it!

"That explains why that darned You Xu changed his mind... So that's what he's going for!" Zhang Xuan said with a livid face.

An aura reminiscent of the brewing of a tempest gathered around him, ready to burst at any moment.

"Teacher..." Luo Qiqi's body stiffened upon seeing his state.

Ever since she first met her teacher, the latter had been able to keep his calm regardless of how bad the situation before him was. Back then, in the underground chamber, when the both of them were in dire straits, he was still able to deal with it with composure. Yet, seeing him in such a state... Just what could have happened?

"I'm fine!" Seeing the worried gaze of the young lady before him, Zhang Xuan took a deep breath before asking, "Where is the Cloudmist Ridge?"

"The Cloudmist Ridge is around a thousand li ¹ east from here. Its name is derived from the clouds that shroud it all year round, making it a conspicuous landmark!" Luo Qiqi said.

"I'll be going out for a moment!"

Upon learning the location, Zhang Xuan immediately rushed out of his residence and began running.

At the same time, he sent a telepathic message out, and not too long later, the Great Violetwing Beast appeared before him. Leaping onto its back, they headed eastward.

Wei Changfeng, since you have pledged your allegiance to me, I

won't allow anything to happen to you!

Chapter 796: For What?

The Great Violetwing Beast was capable of flying at an incredible speed. The distance of a thousand li was covered swiftly.

In the meandering Hongyuan Mountain Range, a towering mountain was shrouded amidst clouds. The sun rays falling on it refracted to form a brilliant myriad of colors. Accompanied with the rich spiritual energy on the grounds and the occasional calls of beasts and fowls, it felt like a heavenly realm.

"So this is the Cloudmist Ridge!" Recalling Luo Qiqi's introduction, Zhang Xuan stared at it with a grave expression.

Even before reaching, he could already feel the concentrated spiritual energy spilling from it, as if a natural Spirit Gathering Formation had been erected on the mountain. Without a doubt, such a blessed land would have countless powerful spirit beasts and saint beasts on it.

"I need to speed up!"

Knowing that Wei Changfeng might be in danger at this very moment, Zhang Xuan urged the Great Violetwing Beast forward. However, as they reached the foot of the mountain, the Great Violetwing Beast seemed to have felt some kind of fearsome aura which rendered it unwilling to advance forward regardless of what he said. Thus, he could only have it wait at the bottom of the mountain while he ventured up alone.

"Eye of Insight!"

Activating the Red Dust Heaven Ascending Steps, Zhang Xuan scanned his surroundings carefully as he advanced forward to search for Wei Changfeng's trail.

The Cloudmist Ridge might only be a portion of Hongyuan Mountain Range, but nevertheless, it still extended over several hundred kilometers. On top of that, visibility here was also

impaired by the clouds drifting in the area. If Zhang Xuan were to search randomly, it would be unlikely for him to find the other party even if he were given a year.

By then, the other party would have been long dead.

"Hm? I can't find his trail?"

After scanning the region, Zhang Xuan was unable to find anything at all, and his eyebrows shot up.

Logically speaking, considering that Wei Changfeng had only set off a day earlier than him, he should be able to pick up his trail through the Eye of Insight easily. Yet, to be unable to find anything at all... what was happening?

"Wei Changfeng must have intentionally erased his trail..." After a moment of thought, the truth dawned on Zhang Xuan.

Considering that he was venturing into a land filled with saint beasts, if he were to leave behind any trail, the enemy could use it to track him, and he would be placed in an extremely dangerous position.

Realizing this, Wei Changfeng must have intentionally erased his trail so as to avoid the attention of the saint beasts.

"How do I find him now?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

He thought that he would be able to find the other party's trail easily with the Eye of Insight, but given the current circumstances, how was he to save Wei Changfeng?

If he were to search aimlessly, it was more likely that he would get lost before he could even find Wei Changfeng.

"Right!" Just as Zhang Xuan was conflicted, a thought suddenly appeared in his mind, and he took out the football-sized object from his storage ring.

Myriad Anthive Nest!

In terms of finding something, there was nothing more efficient

than this fellow!

Hu!

The Myriad Anthive Queen appeared before Zhang Xuan. Over the past few days, it seemed to have become much thinner, and its body was distorted like a fried dough biscuit.

"What happened to you?" Seeing its state, Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

On the other hand, the Myriad Anthive Queen's eyes flew around the place in fury.

Don't you know very well what happened to me?

You forcefully stuffed the Byzantium Helios Beast into my nest, leaving me to squeeze with that huge fellow. If it wasn't for the blessing of the heavens, I might have already been squeezed to death!

But as frustrated as the Myriad Anthive Queen was, she didn't dare to complain to Zhang Xuan.

"Alright, the reason why I brought you out is to have you scout the Cloudmist Ridge for me. I want to find a person!" Knowing that this wasn't the time to be concerned with the state of the Myriad Anthive Queen, Zhang Xuan instructed.

The Myriad Anthive Queen nodded, and opening its mouth, it breathed out a round ball.

Weng weng weng!

The ball grew larger and larger before abruptly bursting, and countless Myriad Anthive Ants burst forth from it, infiltrating the surroundings inconspicuously.

"Master, there is no sign of any humans in the area!"

A few minutes later, the Myriad Anthive Queen reported.

"No sign?" Zhang Xuan frowned. "Search the area further up the

mountain. At the same time, keep a lookout for the saint beasts as well. The moment you find any, report it to me immediately!"

There might be many saint beasts in the area, but it was highly likely that they had segmented the mountain amongst them. As long as they could find the saint beast in charge of the territory they were treading through and avoid it, they should be able to avoid danger.

"Yes!" the Myriad Anthive Queen nodded.

Using its unique ability, it relayed the orders to the Myriad Anthive Ants.

"Let's advance up the mountain!"

Soon, after the Myriad Anthive Queen was done analyzing the beasts in the area, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

The strongest beast at the foot of the mountain was only at Ethereal Treading realm. There was no saint beast yet.

With this intelligence, Zhang Xuan advanced up the mountain with the Myriad Anthive Queen using the safe path found by the Myriad Anthive Ants.

"Master, there seem to be some traces of a fight ahead..."

After advancing some distance, the Myriad Anthive Queen suddenly sent a telepathic message over.

"Are there any corpses?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"There is no human corpse there!" Knowing what Zhang Xuan was worried about, the Myriad Anthive Queen replied.

"Bring me over," Zhang Xuan said grimly.

"Alright!"

The Myriad Anthive Queen pointed the direction where the battle had occurred, and Zhang Xuan flew over discreetly. Soon, he arrived in an area where marks of battle could be seen.

Activating the Eye of Insight, he scanned the surroundings carefully.

The battle happened around ten to twelve hours ago...

On top of those three Virescent Sound Beasts, I can also see traces of a human from the battle marks in the surroundings, Even though these Virescent Sound Beasts aren't too strong, possessing only the cultivation of Perfect Harmonization realm, they possess exceptionally sharp noses. Most likely, they must have caught the scent of the human and followed it here, resulting in the eventual fight.

"Two of them were struck dead in a single blow, but the final one managed to let out a howl in his moment of death. Alarmed, the human smashed its head swiftly in order to silence it. However, even though the Virescent Beast had only managed to let out a momentary shout, its sharp voice should have attracted the attention of plenty of spirit beasts.

Soon, Zhang Xuan finished analyzing the details of the battle swiftly. Most likely, the human was Wei Changfeng.

Even though the battle had ended swiftly, it had still ended up leaving a disturbance in the spiritual energy in the area. This was no different from having one's location exposed.

Having alarmed the saint beasts and spirit beasts in the area, the danger faced from venturing further in was greater than ever.

He went in that direction!

As Zhang Xuan analyzed the scene carefully, a gleam flashed across his eyes as he found a trail left behind by Wei Changfeng while he was escaping, and he hurriedly followed it.

Most likely, Wei Changfeng must have known that it was no longer of any use to hide his trail with his general location revealed. He would be easily uncovered if the beasts were to comb the area. Under such circumstances, rather than wasting his time

on clearing his trail, he decided that it would be better for him to escape as far as he could.

However, it must be said that Wei Changfeng was truly an intelligent person. Knowing that it was only a matter of time before the beasts caught up with him, he chose to take the narrow path up the mountain.

Treading on the narrow path, the spirit beasts and saint beasts would be unable to exploit their numerical advantage against him. On top of that, the massive bodies of the beasts would hinder them on this narrow path, limiting the prowess they could exert.

But naturally, there was a huge flaw in this course of action too. He might still be able to hold his ground at the start, but as his strength depletes battle after battle, he would find himself with nowhere to escape to, as though a noose was slowly tightening on his neck.

Proceeding onward, Zhang Xuan saw quite a few dead spirit beasts along the path.

Perfect Harmonization realm, Ethereal Treading realm, Chrysalis realm...

As the strength of the spirit beasts rose, the battles grew more and more intense. A distance later, Zhang Xuan finally stumbled upon a Half-Saint beast's carcass.

It was a Darkface Steel Bear, and it was killed by a saber slashing through its head.

A Half-Saint has already appeared even though I haven't reached the middle point of the ridge yet... and the beasts will only grow stronger the further up the mountain we proceed... , Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

The more kills Wei Changfeng made, the more beasts he would attract. Even though he was a Saint realm expert, he would eventually reach the limit of his stamina.

I should make haste!

With an ominous feeling weighing on his heart, Zhang Xuan hurried forward. Perhaps all of the spirit beasts and saint beasts had been attracted by Wei Changfeng, or maybe the Myriad Anthive Queen's information network was truly that effective, he had managed to steer clear of any beasts in his way forward.

However, the deeper he ventured, the more intense his eyelid twitched.

Soon, Zhang Xuan stopped at a battlefield.

The surrounding fauna and flora had been completely tramped by the shockwave of battle. There was a massive depression that extended for over several hundred meters. In the depression, one could see a dense concentration of narrow slash marks and huge smash marks.

All in all, it was a complete upheaval.

There are three Nascent Saint realm Blacktail Fox!

With the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan swiftly analyzed the surroundings, and his face darkened.

Even though Nascent Saint realm Blacktail Foxes were no match for Wei Changfeng, they were known to be cunning and their expertise at conducting surprise assault. Based on the marks of battle, it seemed like Wei Changfeng had suffered considerable injuries in the fight as well.

Zhang Xuan casually bent down and picked up a tattered piece of cloth on the ground. It was stained crimson with blood.

This happened two hours ago... , Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly.

Knowing that he was getting closer and closer to Wei Changfeng, he continued rushing ahead.

Not too long later, he stumbled upon another battlefield.

It was an even more intense battle this time. Two Saint realm beasts were lying on the floor, devoid of life. One of them had an arm hanging from the tip of its mouth, and until this point, fresh blood was still spilling from the end of the arm.

It's Wei Changfeng's arm! , Zhang Xuan widened his eyes as he recognized the arm before him.

Assaulted by Saint realm beasts and having an arm torn off him, even if Wei Changfeng managed to slaughter his opponent, it was unlikely for him to be able to proceed much further with all the injuries he had suffered in the battle.

With a brief glance at the surroundings, he also realized that the ground was deeply stained with a human's blood. With such injuries, Wei Changfeng would die very soon if he wasn't treated.

That fellow... Does he really need to go that far? Even if we fail to obtain the Cloudmist Flower, we can always find another alternative together... , Zhang Xuan sighed deeply in lamentation.

Encountering saint beasts with strength comparable to his, Wei Changfeng must have known that it was nigh impossible for him to pass them. Even if he did, it wasn't a guarantee that he would find the Cloudmist Flower, and it was impossible for him to return with the Cloudmist Flower in hand either.

A person as smart as him should have known it was futile and suicidal for him to proceed on!

Hurrying ahead, he advanced yet another several hundred meters and saw a saber stabbed deeply onto the cliff face along the path. The saber was dripping with blood, probably from the deceased saint beast encountered earlier.

Through the various marks of battle, Zhang Xuan could tell that Wei Changfeng's weapon was a Spirit pinnacle saber. Astonished, he hurried forward to pull the saber out.

It's broken?

Upon pulling it out, Zhang Xuan realized that the saber was already snapped into two. It seemed to have been cleanly sliced apart by some kind of unbelievably sharp weapon, and the entire patch in the surroundings was dyed red as well.

For a Saint realm expert to have its Spirit pinnacle weapon snapped in battle, just what did Wei Changfeng encounter?

Taking a swift scan of the surroundings, Zhang Xuan suddenly rushed forward, bent down, and picked up a clump of thick hair from the ground.

This is the hair of a... Saint realm 1-dan pinnacle Ancient Ape? , Zhang Xuan's face darkened as if the underside of a pot.

Wei Changfeng's cultivation was only at Saint realm 1-dan intermediate stage. Given his current fighting prowess, it would be difficult for him to match even a Saint realm 1-dan intermediate stage saint beast, not to mention a Saint realm 1-dan pinnacle Ancient Ape...

He is in true danger this time around. It'll be difficult for him to survive... , Zhang Xuan thought worriedly as he rushed ahead.

As long as Wei Changfeng gave up at this point, he might still stand a chance at escaping. Just what was it that made him push on despite sustaining such severe injuries?

Chapter 797: This is a Father's Love

Deep in the Cloudmist Ridge.

Peng peng peng peng!

A figure was knocked back and crashed heavily into the cliff face. His face was as pale as a sheet of paper, and blood was spilling from his mouth.

He had lost a hand, and most of his bones had snapped from the many intense battles he had fought. Breathing raggedly, it felt as if he was just clutching to the final flicker of his life.

The enemy he was facing was a massive ape-like saint beast. It had a pitch-black body and enormous fists, and it possessed fearsome strength to fit its stature.

"I have not taken the Cloudmist Flower, I can't die just yet!"

Clenching his teeth, he pulled himself out from the cliff face through sheer resolution, and with his gaze fixated in the distance, he immediately charged over.

"Damn it!" Seeing how that fellow was still persisting on, the ape snorted heavily and charged at the man once more.

Upon reaching the level of a saint beast, the ape was already capable of speaking human speech.

It had encountered the human an hour ago, and considering that the other party was a Saint realm 1-dan intermediate stage cultivation, he thought that he should be able to easily send the other party fleeing with fear with a strike of its fist.

Who could have thought that the other party would disregard his injuries entirely and charge on resolutely, as if he was in a trance?

Pursuing the human, it had already landed over twenty clean punches on him.

With the incredible might of its fists, even a fellow Saint realm

pinnacle beast would have succumbed by now. But no matter how many blows it landed on him, he just couldn't be stopped.

Hong long!

With a swift leap, the ape smashed that human into the ground, shattering innumerable bones in his body further.

Pu pu pu!

The human spewed yet another mouthful of fresh blood with so much force that it felt as if he would spew his innards out as well. The ape thought that he had finally defeated the human with this blow, but the other party abruptly leaped out from the ground in the next moment and trudged on.

"Just what is that fellow up to?" The ape couldn't comprehend the human's persistence.

All lifeforms, be it human or beast, carried a natural deference for life. They were driven by a natural tendency for survival, and they would do anything they could to clutch on to life. Yet, that fellow rushed forward adamantly with no regard for his life.

"Soon... I will reach the area where the Cloudmist Flowers grow soon..." Paying no heed to the Ancient Ape, Wei Changfeng glanced at the surroundings as a spark of hope lit in his black eyes.

He was thinking that he would sneak onto the mountain, harvest a stalk of Cloudmist Flower, and leave quietly, but who could have thought that he would be so unlucky as to be spotted by the Virescent Voice Beast so early in, drawing in powerful beasts to him.

To be honest, as the boss of the Spirit Emporium, Wei Changfeng possessed many unique artifacts that would have allowed him to escape even from the Saint 1-dan pinnacle Ancient Ape. But... if he were to do that, it would be impossible for him to make it within the two day deadline that You Xu set.

He needed the Cloudmist Flower to trade for the Ten-leafed

Flower in order to save his daughter's life. For that goal, even if death was at the very end of the path, he would tread on it without any hesitation!

Peng!

Struck yet again, Wei Changfeng was sent tumbling on the ground. With each blow, Wei Changfeng could feel his strength and consciousness being driven out from his body.

In a moment of daze, he could vaguely see a figure beckoning him over...

...

"I haven't met him yet, and I don't even know his gender, but he's our child. Even at the risk of my life, I can't allow anything to happen to him!"

Sitting cross-legged on the ground, a stream of tears flowed down her face as she faced him, "I know that you love me, and you will respect my decision..."

"No..." He wanted to reach out to stop her, but at this very moment, his strength was sealed. No matter how hard he struggled, his body just wouldn't move.

"With the severe injuries I carry on me, my life is already limited. I want to give my life to him and allow him to live on in my stead..."

With a dull moan, she transferred the remaining strength she had in her towards her womb, granting her child the strength to come to this world. A resounding cry of an infant echoed in the cavern...

Finally, he managed to break the seal that bound him, but by this point, she was already lying on the ground, devoid of strength. In his embrace, she smiled, "Changfeng, I'm sorry. Take care of our child and bring her up well..."

Before she could finish her words, her body had already slumped lifelessly.

...

"Your daughter has suffered considerable damage in the womb. I fear that she won't live more than three months!" An old man shook his head.

He gritted his teeth as he heard those words.

This life was one she had exchanged her life for. If his daughter were to die, how could he face the woman he deeply loved?

Thus, he traveled the world, searching for renowned physicians to treat his daughter.

"The spirit of artifacts can grant her soul the power to support her body, allowing her to live on... but this is only a temporary measure. Its effectiveness will eventually wear out..." a 6-star physician told him.

"As long as she can live on, I am willing to pay any price..." he replied with clenched fists.

Thus, he built the Spirit Emporium and went around scouring for as many artifacts as he could, resorting to even underhanded means to obtain them...

Finally...

His daughter's condition improved.

"Papa..."

A young voice sounded. His eyes reddened, and at that moment, he felt as if everything he had done had paid off.

This was because... she was his daughter!

As well as her daughter!

...

"Where is mama?"

An eight-year-old child asked him. The gleam in her eyes and the slight frown on her forehead seemed like an exact replica of hers.

"She... has gone to a faraway place..."

Holding his daughter dearly, his eyes couldn't help but redden.

...

"Father, am I reaching my end? I feel so tired and exhausted..."

"You will be fine. Father will save you..." he spoke with a lump in his throat.

"The Ten-leafed Flower can save your daughter's life..." the young master told him.

"I need a stalk of Cloudmist Flower. If you can bring me a Cloudmist Flower within two days, I will trade my Ten-leafed Flower for it!" Vice School Head You Xu said with a nod.

...

"I can't die yet. If I were to die, there will be no hope for Ruyan as well!"

Many scenes flashed across Wei Changfeng's eyes as he struggled to his feet once more.

If he didn't require the Cloudmist Flower to save her daughter, he would never have been able to push on so far. The Ancient Ape behind him might not be able to comprehend his actions, and Zhang Xuan might not be able to understand his tenacity, but only he knew that he would do anything for his daughter.

In this world, there was nothing more important than his daughter!

"Almost..."

He rushed across the hill, and all of the sudden, the clouds before him parted, and a beautiful white flower appeared in his sight.

"Cloudmist Flower..." Wei Changfeng's body trembled in

agitation.

The only reason why he had trudged on this far was for this. Finally, his goal was right before his eyes!

Peng!

Just as he wanted to rush forward to pick the flower, he was suddenly kicked by the Ancient Ape from the back.

Tumbling on the ground furious once more, Wei Changfeng felt his consciousness blurring. He felt lethargic and powerless, and an urge to rest welled up within him.

"I must obtain it..."

But he still climbed to his feet once more. Rushing forward, he swiftly grabbed the flower and kept it in a jade box.

Hu!

In that instant, he heaved a sigh of relief, and the edges of his lips curled up.

In that instant, he felt that all of the injuries he had sustained was worth it.

With this, the young master would be able to save his daughter. Even if he were to die, he would be able to stand before her proudly and say that he had protected their daughter!

"All this... for a stalk of Cloudmist Flower?"

Seeing the contented smile on that human, the Ancient Ape had an unbelievable look on its face.

It was still wondering what it was that would drive a human to persevere on even at the expense of its life, but to think that this would be all...

A Saint realm expert losing his life over a mere tea leaf... Was this really worth it?

Taking its reactions into sight, Wei Changfeng simply smiled.

How could a beast understand human emotions?

With the item he came for in hand, he took in a deep breath and began trudging down the mountain.

"Hmph! Regardless of what you are here for, the Cloudmist Ridge isn't a place where you can come and leave as you please!"

With a furious roar, the Ancient Ape charged forward and clawed at Wei Changfeng.

Pu he!

How could the severely injured Wei Changfeng stand against the Ancient Ape? His chest was immediately pierced through, and fresh blood spewed from the wounds.

"I..." Wei Changfeng staggered backward weakly. He tried to draw on all of his strength to retaliate, only to realize that he was completely depleted.

His body had already reached its very limit!

He could feel an immense force tugging at his soul, seemingly trying to draw his soul somewhere.

"Is this death? I should be able to meet her now... right?"

His consciousness gradually blurred as his soul began departing from his body to enter an unknown dimension.

"Wei Changfeng!"

In that final moment, he vaguely saw a figure rushing towards him in his blurred vision, and an anxious voice called his name.

"Young master?"

Feebly, he muttered, "Why did you come? It's dangerous here..."

The reason why he dared not tell the young master about the condition of the Cloudmist Ridge was due to his fear that the young master would insist on tagging along with him. If something were to happen to the young master, there would be no one who

could save his daughter!

"Dangerous? If you knew it was dangerous, why didn't you tell me?" Zhang Xuan roared furiously.

He had rushed all the way here, but from the looks of it, he was still too late.

He could feel that the other party's life force had already withered. Not even a 7-star physician would be able to save him now.

Placing his fingers on the other party's acupoint, Zhang Xuan furiously pumped his Heaven's Path zhenqi into Wei Changfeng's body in hope for a miracle. However, as if a bag filled with holes, his zhenqi simply leaked out of the other party's body, unable to do any good at all.

"Young master, don't bother. I know that I... won't make it..."

Flicking his wrist, Wei Changfeng passed a jade box over with trembling hands, "This is the Cloudmist Flower..."

"You..."

Zhang Xuan's face was livid. He really didn't expect that fellow to go so far just for a stalk of Cloudmist Flower.

"You must save her..." Wei Changfeng's voice slowly grew fainter and fainter.

"Don't worry, I will save her. I will let her live an ordinary, no, a life far better than an ordinary one..." Zhang Xuan said hoarsely.

"Thank you, young master..."

Wei Changfeng nodded, but in the next moment, his soul finally succumbed to the force and disappeared into the unknown dimension, and his body slumped back powerlessly.

"Changfeng..."

Sensing the final flicker of life within his subordinate fade,

Zhang Xuan's eyes reddened and he roared furiously.

At this moment, how could he still not comprehend the reason behind Wei Changfeng's actions?

Everything he did was for his daughter!

This is.. a father's love!

The simplest and most selfless love in the world!

...

"Human, this isn't a place where you can enter as you please..."

Upon seeing yet another person rushing in and disregarding its presence even, the Ancient Ape roared in fury.

"This isn't a place where I can enter as I please?" Zhang Xuan raised his head and gazed at the Ancient Ape. "You are the one who killed Wei Changfeng?"

His eyes were filled with coldness and savagery.

Huala!

In the next moment, more than twenty Saint realm puppets appeared abruptly and rushed for the Ancient Ape.

"Make it suffer a fate worse than death!"

Chapter 798: Earth Vein Spirit Essence

"What?"

Not expecting a weak human whom he could easily squeeze to death with a finger of his to have so many Saint realm puppets in his possession, the Ancient Ape's body stiffened. It immediately turned around to flee.

But with so many Saint realm puppets going after him simultaneously, how could it possibly stand any chance at escaping?

Pi li pa la!

The sound of fists and kicks sinking into the flesh echoed resoundingly.

With the experience the puppet had from dealing with the Byzantium Helios Beast, they were able to deal with the Ancient Ape efficiently.

In just a few moments, there was not a single unharmed spot on the Ancient Ape, and it was teetering on the verge of death.

"Don't kill me! I am willing to be your tamed beast!" the Ancient Ape pleaded. At this point, with its life at stake, it couldn't care less about its dignity as a saint beast anymore.

"I don't need it!" Zhang Xuan waved his hands coldly.

It would indeed be convenient for him if he had a Saint realm 1-dan pinnacle tamed beast serving him. But for killing Wei Changfeng... Zhang Xuan wanted it to pay with its life!

Otherwise, how could he face Wei Changfeng's daughter?

"Kill it!"

Turning his gaze away from the Ancient Ape, Zhang Xuan drew out his soul.

If his Heaven's Path zhenqi couldn't save Wei Changfeng, perhaps his means as a soul oracle might still stand a chance.

But after taking a look, he could only shake his head helplessly.

Wei Changfeng was simply far too severely wounded. If not for his sheer determination to obtain the Cloudmist Flower, he would have already died hours ago.

As soon as the tension in his mind was released, his soul was immediately absorbed into an unknown dimension, disappearing from the face of the world.

Putting aside him, not even Kong shi would be able to save Wei Changfeng.

"Don't worry, I will take good care of your daughter!" Zhang Xuan said solemnly as his soul returned to his body.

Even though it hadn't been long since he met Wei Changfeng, and there were even some unpleasant memories between them, Zhang Xuan was still filled with respect for him. Wei Changfeng wasn't a good man, but he was a good father. He was willing to lay down everything he had for his daughter, and that was truly admirable.

Knowing that it was impossible to save Wei Changfeng, Zhang Xuan kept his corpse in his storage ring before turning to the Ancient Ape once more. At this point, it had only a few breaths left in it.

Even though it was a Saint 1-dan pinnacle beast, it was still no match against twenty powerful puppets who knew not of exhaustion or pain.

"Human, as long as you don't kill me, I will let you in on a secret..." Noticing Zhang Xuan's gaze on it, the Ancient Ape anxiously made an offer.

It knew that it would surely die if it didn't do anything, so it could only make a gamble.

"A secret? What secret can you offer me?" Zhang Xuan asked disdainfully.

"It's the location of the Earth Vein Spirit Essence! As long as you spare me, I can bring you to it..." the Ancient Ape hurriedly spoke.

"Earth Vein Spirit Essence?" Zhang Xuan was slightly taken aback.

"Indeed! That is the condensation of spiritual energy that accumulates only within major earth veins. The spiritual energy contained within Earth Vein Spirit Essence is far easier to absorb than those within spirit stones, making it highly useful for cultivators beneath Saint realm!" the Ancient Ape explained hurriedly, fearing that Zhang Xuan wouldn't know what it was.

Zhang Xuan was moved by the offer.

At the current moment, what he was lacking direly at the moment was spirit stones to provide ample spiritual energy for his cultivation. If he could obtain the Earth Vein Spirit Essence, he could be spared a great deal of effort.

Even though he had never heard of the Earth Vein Spirit Essence before, considering that it was the condensation of spiritual energy within major earth veins, it must be incredibly valuable.

"The reason why saint beasts of Cloudmist Ridge disallow humans from entering the mountain is to protect the Earth Vein Spirit Essence. As long as you don't kill me, I can bring you over..." the Ancient Ape offered.

"I will be able to find it even without you!" Zhang Xuan uttered coldly as he raised his hand, and the puppets immediately continued raining blows on the Ancient Ape.

At the same time, Zhang Xuan drew his soul out of his body and formed a series of hand seals.

Soul Art, Soul Search!

As the culprit who killed Wei Changfeng, the Ancient Ape had to die. There was no room for negotiation at all.

Under normal circumstances, given Zhang Xuan's current soul cultivation, it should have been impossible for him to conduct a Soul Search on a Saint realm expert. However, a saint beast's soul was typically weaker than a human Saint realm expert's, and that fellow has also been beaten to the point that it was on the verge of dying.

On top of that, Vicious was also helping him by the side.

As a result, the Ancient Ape succumbed swiftly to the Soul Search.

Tzzzzzzz!

Dragging out the Ancient Ape's soul, its memories and knowledge began flowing in Zhang Xuan's mind.

"There's indeed a lake of Earth Vein Spirit Essence here!"

Browsing through the Ancient Ape's memory, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

The other party didn't lie to him, there was indeed Earth Vein Spirit Essence on the Cloudmist Ridge. It was for fear that humans would discover its existence that they guarded the area faithfully.

To be honest, the Ancient Ape hadn't expected to luck out as well. If it had been anyone else, the other party might have chosen to spare it in consideration of the Earth Vein Spirit Essence. But never in its dreams would it have expected the young man before it would be a soul oracle possessing the ability of Soul Search!

While I do know the location of the Earth Vein Spirit Essence now, it won't be easy for me to get to it. There are four saint beasts of the Ancient Ape's level guarding it... If I had really followed this fellow there, even with my puppets, it would have been unlikely for me to have escaped with my life!

The existence of the Earth Vein Spirit Essence might be true, but the Ancient Ape wasn't speaking the entire truth.

If Zhang Xuan had really listened to it and followed behind it, he would have found himself encircled by four Saint 1-dan pinnacle saint beasts and countless Half-Saint and Nascent Saint beasts. Even with the Otherworldly Demon puppets he had in his possession, it would be extremely difficult for him to break free.

After all, even though the puppets feel no pain and could fight fearlessly, they were still limited by the spiritual energy within them.

After the previous few uses, their energy reserves were already half depleted. Unlike in the underground chamber, where there was a river filled with spiritual energy that could be used to recharge the Otherworldly Demon puppets, it wouldn't be so easy to do it here.

Once the puppets ran out of energy, given Zhang Xuan's current strength, the only fate before him would be death.

Even at the expense of its death, the Ancient Ape intended to drag him down from it.

Under the forceful impact of the Soul Search, the Ancient Ape's soul dissipated into nothingness. After procuring its inner core and other useful parts and storing them in his storage ring, Zhang Xuan fell into deep contemplation,

Based on what it said, the Earth Vein Spirit Essence is made out of spiritual energy. Even though its purity isn't on par with high-tier spirit stones, it is far easier to absorb it, such that even plants could absorb spiritual energy from the Earth Vein Spirit Essence. If I were to give it to the Ten-leafed Flower, I could make it bloom within a single day!

After studying the effects of the Earth Vein Spirit Essence according to the Ancient Ape's understanding of it, Zhang Xuan's

eyes lit up.

While spirit stones had an incredible reserves of spiritual energy within them, its solid form made it less efficient and effective in terms of absorption rate as compared to the Earth Vein Spirit Essence.

If spirit stones was coal, the Earth Vein Spirit Essence would be fuel.

While coal was capable of producing greater heat over a longer period of time, in terms of ignition speed and utility, fuel was still inherently superior.

If Zhang Xuan could obtain that, he would be spared from finding hundreds of high-tier spirit stones he would require to reach Saint realm!

The Earth Vein Spirit Essence is located at the direct center of the Cloudmist Ridge. It isn't too far from here, but... four Saint realm 1-dan beasts are guarding it. On top of that, there are also many Nascent Saint and Half-Saints in the area... It won't be easy for me to bypass them!

Having learned the existence of the Earth Vein Spirit Essence, it was natural that Zhang Xuan would want to obtain it. However, with his current strength, he would only die if he were to attempt to charge in forcefully.

Vicious could suppress a Saint realm 1-dan beast easily, but there was nothing he could do about it when there were too many of them.

After all, he had only just awakened, and he was merely a little more than a heart at the moment. Naturally, his strength was still far from his peak.

Besides, it wouldn't be safe to rely solely on Vicious. If Vicious were to attempt a mutually assured destruction and refuse to help him, he might very well end up losing his life.

Thus, it would be best to depend on himself wherever possible.

"Looks like I should still rely on my soul!" After a moment of contemplation, a thought emerged in Zhang Xuan's mind.

It would be impossible for him to infiltrate the center of the Cloudmist Ridge in his physical body. No matter how well he hid his trail, considering the dense concentration of spirit beasts and saint beasts in the area, he would definitely be found easily. However, it would be a different case if he was just a soul.

Unlike saint realm cultivators, saint beasts had far weaker souls. It would be harder for them to sense the presence of souls.

If Zhang Xuan were to play his cards well, he might be able to creep in silently and smuggle the Earth Vein Spirit Essence out.

"Alright, it's decided then!"

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan sat on the floor and drew his soul out.

With a slight flick, he kept his physical body within the storage ring.

The Myriad Anthive Nest was extremely squeezey with the Byzantium Helios Beast and the Myriad Anthive Queen packed inside. Despite the harsh conditions in the storage ring for a living body, considering Zhang Xuan's current cultivation realm and the resilience of his physical body, it should be fine if it was just for a few hours.

"What should I do about the ring..."

Since he had stored his physical body and his clone within the storage ring, it would be safer for him to bring it along with him wherever he went. Otherwise, if spirit beast were to find his storage ring and take it away, it would be too late for tears.

But if he were to carry something tangible with his soul, that would be going against the very purpose of infiltrating into the

center of the Cloudmist Ridge as an intangible soul. He would be giving away his location to his enemies!

"Wait... what about the Myriad Ants?" A thought suddenly struck Zhang Xuan.

He might be unable to bring the storage ring with him, but he could leave it with the Myriad Ants!

Despite their small size, those ants were still savage beasts. It wasn't too difficult for them to fly with a ring.

Furthermore, the intelligence network they shared allowed them to avoid spirit beasts and saint beasts in advance as well. They could follow his soul silently and bring the storage ring to where he wanted it to be.

Even if some beast really managed to obtain the storage ring from them, as long as there were Myriad Ants keeping tabs on its location, he would still be able to find some way to retrieve the ring.

"It's decided then!"

Zhang Xuan sent a telepathic message to the Myriad Anthive Queen to inform it of his plan, and a Myriad Ant immediately flew over to carry the storage ring. As he had expected, it had no problem flying while bearing the weight of the ring.

"Good. Fly close to the ground, near the shrubs..."

Seeing that his plan was feasible, Zhang Xuan issued it several instructions before advancing to the center of the Cloudmist Ridge.

After the Soul Search he had conducted on the Ancient Ape, he had gained an insight into how the beasts were distributed on the Cloudmist Ridge. With the Myriad Ants scouting the area as well, Zhang Xuan's soul managed to avoid the detection of the spirit beast and saint beast.

An hour later, he arrived before a towering cliff.

Before the cliff was a gigantic waterfall that produced a deafening rumble reminiscent of thunder as it cascaded from the peak. The water eventually led to a river which meandered into the horizon.

"It should be here..."

Zhang Xuan raised his gaze and stared at the waterfall. It was completely concealed behind the cascading water, but if staring at it intently, he could still barely see the outlines of a cavern behind the waterfall. If one hadn't known in advance, it would have been impossible to notice it.

Based on the Ancient Ape's memory, the Earth Vein Spirit Essence was inside the cavern.

Instead of rushing into the cavern, Zhang Xuan first scanned the surroundings, and expected, he found a couple of saint beasts who possessed strength on par with the Ancient Ape camping in the area. Slightly further away, he sensed the presence of at least a dozen Saint realm primary stage, intermediate stage, and advanced stage beasts.

"It's fortunate that I didn't come here in my physical body..."

Upon seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Had he brought his physical body over, he would have definitely been surrounded and killed.

On the other hand, a soul was intangible and nearly indiscernible. As long as he didn't exert any power, it would be difficult for the enemies to notice his presence.

Chapter 799: Breakthrough to Perfect Harmonization Realm

"You head in first!"

Zhang Xuan first issued elaborate instructions to the Myriad Ant carrying his storage ring for it to proceed into the cavern without drawing anyone's attention first before slowly flying over himself.

"It has been some time since Ancient Ape headed out. Why isn't he back yet?"

Before he could reach the cavern, he heard a voice from the surroundings.

Two saint beasts not too far away from the cavern were currently chatting.

The other saint beast harrumphed. "Who knows? But in any case, I heard the enemy is a Saint realm intermediate stage human, so he should be more than enough to subdue the other party. He's probably just toying with him at this point. After all, it has been some time since any humans came to the Cloudmist Ridge!"

They were conversing in the Ancient Beast Language, but Zhang Xuan could still understand their words without any problem.

"Indeed... At least the humans know their place. Knowing that we are around, they dare not come over at all!" the first saint beast said.

Seeing that the two saint beasts were too engrossed in their conversation to notice him, Zhang Xuan dived straight into the cavern.

If it had been any other soul oracle, even if the saint beasts were ignorant in the study of souls, they would still have noticed the yin aura it exuded. However, having cultivated the Heaven's Path Soul Art, his soul was complete, leaving it with no distinct aura. As if a

light breeze, it would be extremely difficult for any unskilled personnel to notice it.

Making use of the massive torrent of water from the waterfall, Zhang Xuan was able to conceal his movement and slip into the cavern without any issue as well.

The cavern was vast, and it was filled with slightly damp air. Zhang Xuan met up with the Myriad Ant and took the ring from it before advancing forward.

The further he advanced, the more humid the surroundings seemed to become. At the same time, the spiritual energy also grew more and more concentrated. At his current location, the spiritual energy concentration was already far above even that of Vice School Head You Xu's residence.

It was indeed a blessed land for cultivation. One would be able to easily achieve what would have taken others several days elsewhere in a single day.

It's no wonder the saint beasts maintain such a tight defense around the Cloudmist Ridge. There is no way anyone would be willing to give up on such a blessed land... Zhang Xuan thought.

Not only was the spiritual energy in the surroundings concentrated, it was incredibly pure as well. Its level of purity was sufficient to even satisfy Zhang Xuan's demands easily.

Advancing forward, Zhang Xuan soon reached the end of the cavern.

There, he saw a round lake of around eight meters in diameter. Within it was an emerald fluid which carried a refreshing air to it. It felt like one would be able to progress greatly in one's cultivation just by absorbing a small portion of it.

This is the Earth Vein Spirit Essence? It's indeed impressive! Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Even though he had learnt of its mystical effects from the

Ancient Ape, it was still very difficult for him to believe that such an incredible item could exist in the world until he finally laid his eyes on it himself.

While its purity was still slightly lacking compared to a high-tier spirit stone, it made up for it with its overwhelming quantity. Even a thousand high-tier spirit stones together might not match the sheer amount of spiritual energy contained within the lake.

The mountains in the Hongyuan Mountain Range are a naturally occurring Spirit Gathering Formation, and the Cloudmist Ridge stood at the very center of the formation. As a result, vast amounts of spiritual energy accumulated in the area. However, the clouds in the surroundings hinder the diffusion of the spiritual energy, and as time went by, the spiritual energy eventually condense into spirit essence... Zhang Xuan deduced as he recalled the geographical terrain in the surroundings and the various sights he had seen so far.

Nevertheless, to form a lake as big as the one before Zhang Xuan, it should have taken at least ten thousand years.

If I can take all of this away, not only will I have no problem advancing to Saint realm, there will even be spare for Zheng Yang and the others' use as well... Zhang Xuan thought in delight.

With this treasure, they would no longer have to frustrate over the lack of spirit stones anymore!

But... how am I supposed to store an entire spirit essence lake?

While Zhang Xuan's storage ring was indeed large enough to put in a lake as big as this, he didn't have any container to store it!

He did have a few wine gourds on him, but those were insignificant compared to the entire lake.

What could he do?

There was nothing that felt worse than stumbling upon a mound of treasure only to realize that one only had the inventory to store

an insignificant portion of it.

Even in his form as a soul, it took a fair bit of luck for him to sneak in here without drawing the attention of the saint beasts. There was no guarantee that it would be the same the next time he came here.

As a result, he had to take away as much as he could this time around. Otherwise, he would be allowing such an ideal opportunity slip through his fingers.

After a moment of contemplation, a thought popped into Zhang Xuan's head.

Perhaps I can use beastskin!

There were quite a few sheets of beastskin in his storage ring. Perhaps, he could tie them together to make a container.

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan accessed his storage ring and pulled out several large sheets of beastskin.

He skillfully manipulated his soul energy to form threads to weave them together, forming a gigantic container. Afterward, he plunged it into the lake to store as much spirit essence in it as possible.

Gugugugugu!

Soon, the beastskin container was full with over twenty tonnes of liquid in it.

Zhang Xuan swiftly stored the beastskin container into his storage ring.

There is still more than half left... Seeing that there was still a lot of spirit essence left in the lake, Zhang Xuan stroked his lower jaw.

Since he was already there, if he didn't clean out the place, he would have a nagging feeling at the back of his mind that he had missed something important.

Sigh, obsessive-compulsive disorder sure is frustrating!

Besides, the saint beasts on the Cloudmist Ridge had a hostile relations with humans, and they had slain countless humans over the years. Every droplet of the Earth Vein Spirit Essence left meant an additional droplet to nourish the enemy.

However, having used up even his beastskin, there was nothing else he could use as a container in his storage ring anymore.

It was impossible for him to store any more than that!

I wonder if there are any objects that could be used to store spirit essence around here...

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment, but after he found that he was still unable to come up with any feasible solution, he decided to take a look around the cavern to see if there was anything he could use.

Hmm? What's this?

Drifting alongside the lake, a pile of items suddenly appeared before Zhang Xuan's eyes, and his eyebrows shot up.

These are... human bones?

Taking a closer look, the pile was astonishingly human bones! Scanning the surroundings, there were several hundred other similar skeletal piles all around the cavern!

Aren't humans forbidden from entering this area? How can there be human skeletons here?

Zhang Xuan was bewildered.

With the tight defenses the saint beasts and spirit beasts had organized on the Cloudmist Ridge, it should have been impossible for any humans to get in here. Thus, the presence of so many skeletons was unnatural.

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan drifted down to take an even closer look.

Most of the skeletal piles were male, and not too far from the pile, he found several weapons. These weapons weren't too high

tiered, averaging at around Spirit intermediate-tier.

Zhang Xuan picked one up using his soul energy, but upon attempting a slash, the weapon immediately snapped in two.

It seemed the weapon had suffered severe damage in the midst of an intense battle, resulting in the loss of its durability.

It appeared that an army had barged into the cavern in hopes of securing the grounds, only to eventually fall in defeat.

Hmm?

As Zhang Xuan was casually looking around, he suddenly caught sight of a storage ring.

Interested, he immediately immersed his consciousness into the ring.

There's nothing inside. Seems like someone has already emptied it out... Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Even though spirit beasts were unable to access storage rings, saint beasts could. Considering the sheer number of saint beasts in the area, if there had been anything good in those storage rings, they would have already long emptied them out. How could they possibly leave anything behind for him?

These are... books?

Just as Zhang Xuan was going to back out of the storage ring, he suddenly caught sight of an insignificant pile of items in the very corner of the storage ring. Proceeding closer, he realized that they were all books!

Saint beasts had their own heritage, and the innate differences between a human and a beast also made it impossible for them to take up human cultivation techniques and battle techniques as well. As such, these books were completely useless to them.

Zhang Xuan's eyes swiftly scanned through them and replicated them in the Library of Heaven's Path.

Indeed, they really are cultivation technique and battle technique manuals! Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

Most human cultivators had the habit of carrying dozens of books with them in their storage rings for reference or studying purposes.

It was the same here as well. The storage ring had over a hundred books in it.

They spanned over Cosmos Bridge realm, Perfect Harmonization realm, and Ethereal Treading realm. However, due to the lacking quantity, Zhang Xuan was still unable to form a Heaven's Path Divine Art out of them.

Perhaps there might be other storage rings in the area. If I can find more books, I just might be able to compile a complete Heaven's Path Divine Art...

Since Zhang Xuan was in no hurry either, he scanned through the area carefully, and before long, he had unearthed more than twenty storage rings.

For several hundred corpses to only have so many rings, the rest must have been claimed by the other saints beasts.

Just like the ring Zhang Xuan had looked into before, the valuable items had also been emptied out of them, leaving behind only a couple of books.

Zhang Xuan swiftly replicated the books in his Library of Heaven's Path.

There are over a thousand Perfect Harmonization realm cultivation technique manuals, five hundred for Ethereal Treading realm, and two hundred for Chrysalis realm...

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

He still didn't have sufficient books to compile a complete Heaven's Path Divine Art for Ethereal Treading realm and

Chrysalis realm, but with over a thousand for Perfect Harmonization realm, he should be able to do so for that one.

Compile!

Before long, a Perfect Harmonization realm Heaven's Path Divine Art appeared before his eyes. Flipping through it casually, its contents appeared in Zhang Xuan's mind.

Since I am unable to take away the remaining Earth Vein Spirit Essence, I might as well cultivate here and save as much as I can...

Since there was nothing that could be used as a container in the surroundings, Zhang Xuan decided to take this chance to raise his cultivation realm as well.

Thriftiness is a virtue. What can be saved should be saved.

Zhang Xuan took out his physical body and returned his soul into it. After which, with a flick of his wrist, his clone also appeared before him.

Just like his main body, his clone had also only cultivated up to Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle. Given the sheer amount of Earth Vein Spirit Essence remaining in the lake, it should be more than enough to share between him and his clone.

Thus, after informing his clone about the situation, Zhang Xuan stepped into the lake first.

Tzzzzz!

Driving the Perfect Harmonization realm Heaven's Path Divine Art, the spirit essence around him began flowing into his body through his acupoints.

Hong long!

With a crisp echo, he successfully achieved a breakthrough from Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle to Perfect Harmonization realm.

With the rise in his cultivation, the rate at which he could absorb spiritual energy increased as well. Due to the overwhelming speed

he was absorbing the spirit essence at, a vortex formed within the lake.

Perfect Harmonization realm primary stage!

Perfect Harmonization realm intermediate stage!

Perfect Harmonization realm advanced stage!

...

In just an hour, Zhang Xuan's cultivation had reached Perfect Harmonization realm pinnacle.

Now for my soul...

After he was done raising his zhenqi cultivation, Zhang Xuan immediately drew out his soul and continued cultivating.

His soul had already reached Perfect Harmonization realm advanced stage, so it only took him ten minutes to reach pinnacle.

With his zhenqi cultivation and soul cultivation reaching new heights, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Feeling the immense power he wielded within, his eyes glowed in excitement.

Typically speaking, it would have taken him at least several dozen high-tier spirit stones in order to raise his soul cultivation and zhenqi cultivation to Perfect Harmonization realm pinnacle. However, to be able to do this for free, he couldn't help but feel extremely comforted within.

Alright...

Standing up, Zhang Xuan glanced at the spirit essence to see how much of it was left when he suddenly froze.

At this very moment, he could see the floor of the spirit essence lake, which had a diameter of eight meters. In a little more than an hour, the Earth Vein Spirit Essence had been almost completely depleted.

How is this possible?

Zhang Xuan had only advanced his cultivation to Perfect Harmonization realm pinnacle, so how could he use have possibly used so much of it?

He subconsciously turned his gaze to his clone, and his eyes narrowed in shock. Unable to hold himself back, he cursed, "Screw you, you damned wastrel!"

Chapter 800: Zheng Yang Lectures!

At this moment, he saw that his clone's soul had also left his body, and it was currently absorbing the spiritual energy in the lake frenziedly.

With all the absorption he had done, his soul had doubled in size, reaching around twenty meters tall and nearly filling the entire cavern.

Most of the remaining spirit essence had been absorbed by that fellow before him.

Even though his clone's soul cultivation was still at Perfect Harmonization realm, the sheer size and power surrounding the soul felt reminiscent of a deity, as if it wielded boundless power in its hands.

After breaking the twenty-meter bottleneck, the soul seemed to have undergone some kind of mysterious metamorphosis yet again. It became considerably more resilient, and the strength it wielded seemed to have grown far more fearsome as well.

Against such a huge soul, even Lu Chong's soul, which he had seen in the latter's consciousness back then, paled in comparison.

Zhang Xuan had barely used a hundredth of the spirit essence to raise his zhenqi cultivation and soul cultivation to Perfect Harmonization realm pinnacle, but that fellow actually sapped the entire lake dry... Just the thought of it left him so frenzied that he could tear his hair out.

Even though it was indeed true that he had no way of taking away the remaining Earth Vein Spirit Essence, he still couldn't help but feel his heart bleed upon seeing that huge lake being reduced to nothing.

Hu!

Hearing Zhang Xuan's roar, his clone's soul immediately slipped

back into his body, and an incredible aura burst from its body, leaving Zhang Xuan's eyebrows twitching uncontrollably.

Zhang Xuan wasn't a match for it before, and he was even less so now.

Despite coming from the same origin, his clone's soul had been nourished by the Nine Hearts Lotus, granting it strength far greater than the main body.

For the main body to be inferior to the clone... How humiliating!

Nevertheless, considering that they shared the same consciousness, they could be considered as one entity. His clone's growth was also good news for him.

"You should return to the storage ring for now!"

Knowing that it was impossible to make his clone spit out the spirit essence that it had absorbed, Zhang Xuan could only sigh helplessly and have his clone return to the storage ring.

He, on the other hand, leaped out of the lake and began assessing himself internally.

Having reached Perfect Harmonization realm pinnacle, the current strength that he could draw from his zhenqi cultivation was 14,000,000 ding, which was comparable to an Ethereal Treading realm primary stage expert.

Additionally, the maximum power he could draw from his soul cultivation had also reached 11,000,000 ding. Adding in the 8,000,000 ding from his physical body, his overall maximum strength currently stood at 33,000,000 ding, which was nearly on par with a Transcendent Mortal 9-dan Chrysalis realm pinnacle expert.

(Chrysalis realm pinnacle—34,000,000 ding)

With this kind of strength, he could definitely be ranked amongst the top of the student populace. Nonetheless, it was still far from

matching up to the saint beasts camping outside.

I should leave now!

With his work done, Zhang Xuan immediately drew out his soul and placed his physical body in the storage ring. Holding it himself, he carefully sneaked out of the cavern.

"Wait a moment, why does it feel like the spiritual energy concentration inside has fallen?"

"Let's take a look!"

But before he could reach the cavern entrance, he suddenly heard the bellows of the saint beasts outside.

In that split moment, Zhang Xuan swiftly hid the storage ring behind a boulder before lying motionlessly with his soul pressed against the wall.

Hu!

Right after he did that, two saint beasts abruptly appeared at the entrance of the cavern and rushed in at a speed so fast that it nearly stirred up a hurricane.

It was due to the Earth Vein Spirit Essence that the cavern was unbelievably rich in spiritual energy. However, along with its depletion, the concentration of spiritual energy in the area began falling at a perceptible rate. No matter how slow the saint beasts were, it was impossible for them to not notice it.

Now is my chance, I should quickly leave!

Knowing that the saint beasts would comb through every nook and cranny once they noticed that the lake of spirit essence had been completely depleted, Zhang Xuan dared not waste a single moment. He quickly picked up his storage ring and darted out of the cavern.

"AHHHHHHH!!! SOMEONE STOLE THE SPIRIT ESSENCE!"

"Damn it, who was the one who did it!"

Right after Zhang Xuan left the cavern, he heard a deafening roar from within. Not daring to waste even a split second, he immediately dived into the waterfall.

In the next instant, a pressure so great that it felt as if even the earth would be reduced to dust burst out from the cavern, enveloping the area.

"Someone has sneaked into our Cloudmist Ridge. All beasts, listen to my command. Comb through the entire mountain and eliminate any suspicious people you see!"

Hong long!

Countless spirit beasts and saint beasts roared resoundingly in response, shaking the entire mountain.

Looks like I won't be able to escape for the time being...

With all of the spirit beasts and saint beasts of the Cloudmist Ridge combing the area to search for him, it would be difficult for Zhang Xuan to escape even in his state as a soul. Thus, he decided to advance under the concealment of the river for the time being.

However, a short moment later, a dozen spirit beasts suddenly dived in to search the river.

It was truly fortunate that Zhang Xuan was currently in his soul state. With his storage ring hidden amidst the gravel of the seabed, there was nothing that could betray his presence to those spirit beasts. As such, after scouring the seabed for a moment, they were still unable to find anything at all, so they could only back out.

After swimming for an unknown period of time, Zhang Xuan finally reached the end of the river. By the time his soul finally left the river, the sky was already dark.

Zhang Xuan scanned his surroundings, and there were still quite a number of spirit beasts around. However, it would be nigh impossible for any beast beneath Saint realm to notice his presence.

Even so, Zhang Xuan still decided to proceed carefully. Sometimes, the sensitivity of a spirit beast to its surroundings far surpassed what humans could even imagine. It would truly be unfortunate if he were to be caught and encircled at this point.

Thus, he slowly proceeded down the mountain, stopping from time to time whenever he felt that a spirit beast's attention was focused nearby. As a result, it was already dawn by the time he reached the foot of the mountain.

Finally, when he was a safe distance away from the Cloudmist Ridge, he found a discreet location and took out his physical body. After returning his soul to his physical body, he summoned the Great Violetwing Beast and swiftly returned to the academy.

He might have failed to save Wei Changfeng, but he was determined to save his daughter!

So far, it had been an entire day since he had left the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

...

While Zhang Xuan was preoccupied with his business at the Cloudmist Ridge, a huge commotion had broken out in the Master Teacher Academy.

Sun Qiang had rushed to Zhang Xuan's Elite Sector residence in order to report the matter of someone being interested in learning battle techniques from Zheng Yang and the others to him, but of course, the latter was nowhere to be found.

At the same time, Zheng Yang and the others had also entered the headquarters of the True Helios Faction, following behind Xue Zhenyang.

In a vast courtyard...

"Gather everyone!" Xue Zhenyang issued a command as soon as he returned.

Not long later, everyone in the True Helios Faction was standing before him.

As expected of one of the top few factions in the academy. The entire True Helios Faction consisted of more than two thousand people, and its members spanned from Grade-1 to Grade-4.

Seeing that all of the members were gathered there, Xue Zhenyang's gaze scanned through the crowd before he began speaking. "The reason I have gathered you all here today is to announce to you all that I have found an expert to impart the essence of battle techniques to the faction members!"

"An expert?"

"Hasn't the faction leader been the one who has been giving us lessons on battle techniques? Did he manage to find someone more formidable than he is?"

Everyone looked at one another doubtfully.

All along, other than the teachers they were under, the one who had been guiding them in their battle techniques had been Xue Zhenyang.

Xue Zhenyang was one of the greatest talents in the Martial Arts School, so they had benefited greatly from his teachings as well. In truth, this was also the very reason most of them had chosen to join the True Helios Faction.

Yet, he had gathered all of them to tell them that there was another expert who would be guiding them on their battle techniques... Was he for real?

"Allow me to introduce you to my new spearmanship teacher, Zheng Yang. The lecture today will be conducted by him. He possesses transcendental skills in spear arts, so I believe that you will benefit greatly from his lecture!" Xue Zhenyang introduced with a wave of his hand.

"Zheng Yang?"

"Spearmanship teacher?"

"But this fellow seems to be only sixteen or seventeen years old!"

"A lad as young as him is going to explain spearmanship to us?"

Seeing a young man walk up to the podium, the crowd was completely dumbfounded.

They were the cream of the crop amongst master teachers, the geniuses of the geniuses. Yet, to have a teenage child lecture them... Wasn't this taking them too lightly?

"Today, what I will be talking to you about is the fundamentals of spearmanship..."

Standing before such a huge crowd, Zheng Yang couldn't help but feel a little anxious. However, as he began speaking about spearmanship, the confidence and pride in his heart dispelled the doubts in his mind, and his words gradually grew smoother and more fluent.

"It's possible to interpret spearmanship in such a manner?"

"Formidable! Just by listening to his lecture, I feel like my understanding of spearmanship has been brought up several notches!"

"The concepts that he's teaching are profound, but he is able to bring them across directly through simple words. On top of that, the concepts that he's explained are applicable not only to the spear but other weapons as well!"

"His lecture has deepened my understanding of swordsmanship as well..."

...

The crowd initially had their reservations about having a teenage child lecture them, and they were prepared to see the other party make a fool out of himself. However, just by listening for a moment, they were completely awed.

As young as the person before them might be, the concepts that he spoke of were a direct interpretation of the crux of spearmanship. It was very likely that even the elders in the academy might not have as deep an understanding of spearmanship as he did.

It was no wonder the faction leader went all out to invite him there and gathered all of them together to listen to his lecture. He was indeed more than qualified for this.

...

"What did you say? Xue Zhenyang invited a spearmanship expert from the streets to conduct a lecture for his members?"

In the Ashen Moon Faction, Long Cangyue stared at the reporting student with eyes filled with disbelief.

"Yes! The person he invited has an extremely deep understanding of spearmanship. Two hours into the lecture, almost half of the spear practitioners of the True Helios Faction had already achieved a breakthrough!" the reporting student replied.

"Almost half of them made a breakthrough?" Long Cangyue was shocked.

Making an advancement in one's mastery of a weapon was far more difficult than making an advancement in one's cultivation. The latter could be achieved through diligence and good resources, but the former was highly dependent on one's aptitude. It was easy to learn theories, but comprehending the core of the concept was another different matter.

Yet, to make half of the spear practitioners achieve a breakthrough in just two hours...

Just how did that fellow do it?

Where in the world did Xue Zhenyang find such a monstrous figure?

"If this matter is true, the True Helios Faction will only grow stronger and stronger... I will have to look for Dong Xin to discuss this matter!"

Realizing the significance of this matter, Long Cangyue immediately made his way to Dong Xin's residence anxiously.

...

"Preposterous!"

In the school head's office, the head of the Martial Arts School, Xu Changqing, flung his sleeves furiously after hearing a teacher's report.

Xue Zhenyang was his direct disciple. He could condone him causing trouble from time to time, but to invite a teenage child over to the Martial Arts School to lecture their students... Wasn't that making a mockery out of their school?

If word were to spread, how could their Martial Arts School hold its head high before the other schools?

"I'll go and take a look!"

Harrumphing coldly, Xu Changqing left his room and walked swiftly to the True Helios Faction's headquarters.

Before long, he had arrived before the courtyard.

There are so many people here? Xu Changqing's eyebrows shot up in astonishment at the sight before him.

The courtyard, from the podium to the very entrance, was completely packed with people. There was literally a sea of people before him!

Even though the True Helios Faction was a student organization, Xu Changqing still knew a thing or two about it. Based on what he knew, the True Helios Faction should only have had two thousand people or so.

But the crowd before him... no matter how he looked at it, there

should at least be five thousand people here!

Five thousand people had gathered there to listen to the lecture of a teenage child?

Ridiculous! This was utterly ridiculous!

Just as Xu Changqing was about to step into the courtyard, a plump man holding a basket in his hand abruptly stepped over and blocked his way. "It will cost you two hundred middle-tier spirit stones to enter."

"I have to pay to enter?" Hearing those words, Xu Changqing's face turned livid.

It was already bad enough that Xue Zhenyang found a person of doubtful background to conduct a lecture in the Martial Arts School, but to think that he would have to pay two hundred middle-tier spirit stones to enter... This was even costlier than the lecture of normal 6-star master teachers!

Furthermore, the more students there were in a lecture, the cheaper it should have been.

There were nearly five thousand people in there, and yet they were still charging two hundred spirit stones per person... Didn't that mean that they would earn a million middle-tier spirit stones in just a single lecture?

Please, not even a 7-star master teacher charged others in such a manner!

"Why? You can't afford it? Why even bother coming here when you can't even afford it? No wonder you still can't graduate despite being so old!"

Seeing that the old man before him was trying to barge in without paying, the plump man harrumphed in disdain. "So, you're broke!"

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